T.C.
ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TURKISH AND RUSSIAN POLICIES TOWARDS THE WESTERN BALKANS: THE CASE OF SERBIA (2000-2014)

MASTER THESIS

Irena FEMIĆ

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ANKARA, 2022

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Thesis Advisor
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CONFIRMATION PAGE

The thesis study “Comparative Analysis of Turkish and Russian Policies towards the Western Balkans: the Case of Serbia (2000-2014)” prepared by Irena Femić is approved unanimously by the jury as Master’s thesis in Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Social Sciences Institute Department of International Relations.

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The Date of Thesis Defence: 19/09/2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my immense gratitude to my mentor Doç. Dr. Bayram SİNKAYA for his support, guidance, tireless criticism, and comments he has provided during this challenging period.

I want to thank Republic of Turkey and Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) for giving me the opportunity to come to Turkey and complete my high education here.

I also want to thank my family, in the first place my parents Dragana FEMIĆ and Slobodan FEMIĆ for doing their best to give me the best education possible. This success would not have been possible without their support and sacrifice through all these years.

And last but not the least, I want to thank my friends for being there for me and encouraging me during difficult times. I also want to thank myself for being stubborn and not giving up when it seemed like there was no end to this long and exhausting writing process.

ABSTRACT

Comparative Analysis of Turkish and Russian Policies towards the Western Balkans: the Case of Serbia (2000-2014).

The Balkan Peninsula has been an important point of connection between Europe and Asia for centuries, both by land and sea. The characteristic of this area is the centuries-old fragmentation in geographical as well as in the cultural, ideological, and political sense. Another factor that characterizes the area of the Balkans is the fact that many empires aimed to conquer this strategically important realm. What is interesting to observe in the light of current international affairs, is the engagement of great powers such as Russia and Turkey, particularly in the Western Balkan region. The reasons of their interests are multiple and range from traditional historical relationships to current political and economic issues. Due to its geographically strategic position, as a country that connects Eastern and Western Europe and historically significant ties, Serbia has become the stage where both Russia and Turkey have managed to secure their roles as big powers. Therefore, this is an interesting area for research, with the aim of laying the foundations for understanding contemporary political relations in this region. The main aim of this research is to analyse and compare Turkish and Russian foreign policy in the Western Balkans. We aim to create a complete picture of today's influence Russia and Turkey have in the Western Balkans, with a particular emphasize on Serbia and to analyse the existing relationships and the interests behind them.

Keywords: Russia, Turkey, Foreign Policy, Western Balkans, Serbia, comparative analysis

ÖZET

Batı Balkanlara Yönelik Türk ve Rus Politikalarının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi: Sırbistan Örneği (2000-2014).

Balkan Yarımadası, yüzyıllar boyunca hem karadan hem de denizden Avrupa ve Asya arasında önemli bir bağlantı noktası olmuştur. Bu bölgenin özelliği, coğrafi olarak olduğu kadar kültürel, ideolojik ve politik anlamda da asırlardır süren parçalanmışlıktır. Balkanlar bölgesini karakterize eden bir diğer faktör, birçok imparatorluğun stratejik olarak önemli olan bu alanı fethetmeyi amaçladığı gerçeğidir. Güncel uluslararası gelişmeler ışığında dikkat çekici olan, Rusya ve Türkiye gibi büyük güçlerin özellikle Batı Balkan bölgesinde angajmanlarıdır. Çıkarlarının nedenleri çoktur ve geleneksel tarihsel ilişkilerden güncel siyasi ve ekonomik meselelere kadar uzanır. Coğrafi olarak stratejik konumu, Doğu ve Batı Avrupa'yı birbirine bağlayan ve tarihsel olarak önemli bağları olan bir ülke olarak Sırbistan, hem Rusya'nın hem de Türkiye'nin büyük güçler olarak rollerini güvence altına almayı başardığı bir aşama haline geldi. Bu nedenle, bu bölgedeki çağdaş siyasi ilişkileri anlamak için temelleri atmak amacıyla ilginç bir araştırma alanıdır. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, Batı Balkanlar'daki Türk ve Rus dış politikasını analiz etmek ve karşılaştırmaktır. Rusya'nın ve Türkiye'nin Batı Balkanlar'da sahip olduğu bugünkü nüfuzun tam bir resmini, Sırbistan'a özel bir vurgu yaparak ve bunların arkasındaki mevcut ilişkileri ve çıkarları analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktayız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Rusya, Dış Politika, Batı Balkanlar, Sırbistan, karşılaştırmalı analiz

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LIST OF ABBRIEVATIONS

CSTO : Collective Security Treaty Organization
DOS : Democratic Opposition of Serbia
EU : European Union
FRY : Federative Republic of Yugoslavia
HLCC : High-Level Cooperation Council
IAP : Ionian Adriatic Pipeline
ICTY : International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia
IPAP : Individual Partnership Action Plan
JDP : Justice and Development Party
KAP : Aluminium Plant Podgorica
KFOR : Kosovo Force
NATO : North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIS : Serbian Petroleum Industries
RCC : Regional Cooperation Council
RSHC : Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre
SAP : Stabilization and Association Process
SCG : Union of Serbia and Montenegro
SEECP : South-East European Countries Cooperation Process
SFRY : Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia
SNS : Serbian Progressive Party
SPS : Serbian Socialist Party
TANAP : Trans Anatolian Gas Pipeline
TAP : Trans Adriatic Gas Pipeline
TIKA : Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TRT : Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
U.S. : United States
UN : United Nations
UNMIK : United Nations Mission in Kosovo
USA : United States of America
USSR : Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YEE : Yunus Emre Institute
YTB : Presidency of Turks Abroad and Relative Communities

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Balkans have always been a region with a complex and tempestuous history, and a region where different cultures, religious, and civilizations have crossed paths. Spreading over the surface of 550.000 km, with a population of approximately 60 million, and often described as the "other of Europe", for centuries the Balkan peninsula has been regarded as the intersection of geographical, political, strategic, and economic interests of global powers and actors that shape international relations.[1] The Balkan Peninsula is an established geographical term, known to immerse the south-eastern part of the European continent.[2] It is placed between the basin of the two great rivers Sava and Danube, and encompasses the territory bordered by the Black Sea in the east, Aegean Sea in the south, and Adriatic Sea in the West.[3] With its significant geographical position, Balkans represent an important point of connection between Europe and Asia, both by land and sea. Belonging to the Mediterranean basin, the access of roads to the Bosporus and the Dardanelles, frames the geostrategic importance of the peninsula.[4] The physical and geographical characteristics of the Balkans unequivocally indicate its geopolitical and geostrategic significance. Nowadays, the term Balkans has been linked with a rather geo-political concept, than just a geographical term, where epithets such as the Western Balkans have emerged.[5]

The Western Balkans is a political-linguistic term introduced by the European bureaucrats during the Austrian presidency of the European Union in 1998, referring to the part of the Balkan peninsula that was outside of the Union.[6] The Western Balkans represents an established geographical form that includes countries of former Yugoslavia, without Slovenia and Croatia, plus Albania: Serbia (including Kosovo), Montenegro, Bosnia and

[1] Maria Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans.* Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 3.
[2] Due to this fact, in some literature the term South-East Europe is also used.
[3] Danforth, L., Allcock,. John B. and Crampton, Richard J. "Balkans." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed July 5, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/place/Balkans.
[4] Dragan Petrović. *Geopolitika Balkana.* Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 2014, p. 18-19.
[5] Nevenka Jeftić-Šarčević. "Zapadni Balkan u projekciji "Turske Strateške Vizije". *Medjunarodni Problemi* 62, no.4 (2010): 691-714.
[6] The name became customary and generally accepted in international politics accordingly. See Milica Delević. *Regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.* Brussels: Institute for Security Studies, 2007., p. 15.; Dejana M. Vukasović. "European Union and Otherness: The Case of Balkan." *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 50 (2018): 1-12.

Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, and this is the term that will be accepted and used in our research further on.

After the end of the Cold War and the civil war (1991-1995) that resulted in collapse of Yugoslavia, Western Balkans were a "politically fragmented region, with multi-ethnic states that were politically unstable, which created a convenient environment for different international actors to spread its influence."[7] The transition process of the Western Balkan countries was different from the transition of other post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, mainly due to the consequences of ethnic conflicts that resulted in a stalemate in the democratization process, economic stagnation, and security destabilization of the region.[8] Namely, the new emerging states, were simultaneously placed in the international context of the new world order, which only put them under the influence of great powers, in the first row the European Union (EU).[9] Besides the EU, the region of the Western Balkans was starting to draw attention of other powers such as Russia and Turkey. Both Russia and Turkey were politically involved in the region during the events that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but the region was not amongst the highly prioritized issues on their foreign policy agenda. However, this has changed at the beginning of the new century, reciprocally with the change in the international relations and emergence of multipolar international system.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Russia returned to the international scene guided by a new foreign policy agenda, which in the first place included national interests and economic interests. The goal was to recover its former glory, power, and economic strength.

[7] Abit Hoxha, Arber, Ahmeti, and Agim Musliu. "Russian Influence in the Western Balkans. Carrot or Stick?" in *Russia in the Balkans. Threat or Opportunity* (pp. 61-87), Lubin: Institute of East-Central Europe, 2014.

[8] While elaborating on the Western Balkan transformation process, most scholars emphasize the state-building and nation-building process. Dorian Jano argues that the dissolution as complex as it already was, has gotten even more complicated by the specificities of each state/entity. Added to that the weakness of the state, and the result is the collapse of the state itself. This is where the term *Balkanization,* can be used to best explain the multi-layered economic, historical, political, and cultural change. Maria Todorova in her book, "Imagining the Balkans" thoroughly explains the emergence of this term, and how from the wars of the 1990s, it has gotten a rather pejorative meaning. See Dorian Jano. "From 'Balkanization' to 'Europeanization': The Stages of Western Balkans Complex Transformations." *L'Europe en Formation* 3, no. 349/350 (2008): 55-69; Maria Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans.* Oxford: University Press, 2009.

[9] The first indicated action initiated by the EU to the Western Balkans was shown in 1999, with the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). The goal of SAP was the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, that would cohere the EU and the Western Balkan countries in a formal association over a transition period, with the full membership as the ultimate goal. This was the first time in history that the Union has turned to the Western Balkan region and expressed its long-term commitment. Since then, all of the Western Balkan countries have openly expressed their will to join the EU, defining European integration as one of their main foreign policy goals. See Florian Bieber. "Building Impossible States? State-Building Strategies and EU Membership in the Western Balkans." *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 10 (2011): 1783-1802.

Vladimir Putin's era (2000-2008) represented a strong moment of stabilization and the establishment of internal sovereignty.[10] Unlike Boris Yeltsin's decade (1991-1999), Russia was no longer the object of the Western players and has slowly begun to return to the world stage as an active regional and global player.[11] As a part of that strategic return to the regional and world stage, Russia has once again shown interest in the Western Balkans, an area where Russia traditionally has a strong foothold. Throughout history, Russia has always shown a strategic interest in this region, which was expressed through its imperial state policy. Nowadays, Russia wants to impose itself as a traditional protector of the Western Balkan states. Moreover, Russia wants to infringe strong political concepts of other rivals in this area, as for Russia hegemony in the Balkans was and still is considered a success in the traditional geopolitical contest.[12]

Turkey also in line with historical, geographical, religious, and cultural ties, as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, wants to regain the former glory and influence in the region. Turkey's foreign policy approach defined a new way of acting on the international political scene, with an established 'zero problem with neighbours' policy. In fact, that policy aimed reviving Turkish political, cultural, economic influence in the neighbouring regions including the Western Balkans. Therefore, the Western Balkans found itself at the centre of regional rivalry and competition again. Turkey's long-dormant political ambitions for the region, whose roots go back to cultural, religious, and historical ties to the former Ottoman Empire, have been awakened, and often being described as Neo-Ottomanism, have started to prevail the course of Turkish foreign policy in the region. As it will be shown Turkey expands its influence in region, using a combination of political, economic, and cultural tools, with a keen interest to deepen relations with the Muslim communities living in the "former Ottoman territories."[13]

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[10] Vladimir Putin was appointed foreign intelligence officer to the Russian intelligence service, known as the KGB (Committee for State Security) during the Soviet era, later renamed the Federal Security Service (FSB). After working at various levels in this institution, he took office in the State Administration in 1997 and in the State Audit Administration in 1998. In 1998 and 1999, he worked as a secretary in the Russian Security Council as well as the head of the FSB. Finally, he became the Russian prime minister in 1999, and the President on 31 December 1999 with Yeltsin's resignation. Putin served as the country's President from 1999 to 2008, and from 2012 until today. In the period 2008-2012, he served as the prime minister of Russian Federation. See Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Vladimir Putin." Encyclopedia Britannica, Accessed January 29,2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Putin.

[11] Boris Yeltsin was president of Russia 1991-1999.

[12] Eduard Abrahamyan. "'Pax Russica' in the Balkans: Serbia between Myth and Reality." eInternational Relations (2015), Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2601733, Accessed April 10, 2022.

[13] Srdja Trfković. "Turkey as a regional power: Neo-Ottomanism in action." *Politea* 1, no. 2 (2011): 83-95., p. 83-84.

With the population of 7.186.862 (without Kosovo) and surface of 88.499 km2, Serbia emerged as territorially the biggest state in the Western Balkans after the collapse of Yugoslavia. After the independence of the Republic of Montenegro in 2006, and disappearance of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SCG), Republic of Serbia became an independent and sovereign state, and the successor of the international legal subjectivity of SCG.[14] Serbian territory, geographically and especially geo-strategically, represents the natural and shortest connection between Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean.[15] Through the geo-space of Serbia and the Balkan Peninsula, a continental connection is being established between Western and Central Europe, and the Middle East. This fact significantly affects the geostrategic position of Serbia because it is included in the long-term geopolitical interests of the great powers, in our case Russia and Turkey, who had the historical constant presence in this area.

1.1. The Scope and Purpose of the Study

The main goal of our study is to analyse and compare Turkish and Russian foreign policy in the Western Balkans. We aim to create a complete picture of today's influence Russia and Turkey have in the Western Balkans, with a particular emphasize on Serbia, and to analyse their existing relationships and the interests behind them. Accordingly, we set the following research question and hypothesis that will guide us through our further analysis: *To what extent does the activism in Russian and Turkish foreign policy towards the countries of the Western Balkans correspond with their ambitions to be distinguished as great powers?*

Our main hypothesis is that Russia and Turkey, by conducting a pro-active foreign policy in the region, since the beginning of 21st strive to be recognized as great powers in the Western Balkans, in line with their historical, geographical, religious, and cultural ties

[14] Serbia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918, which became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. Kingdom of Yugoslavia became Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFY) in 1943, respectively Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) in 1946. In 1963, it became the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), which consisted of 6 states: Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia. In 1992, Serbia and Montenegro proclaimed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) as the legal successor of the SFRY. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia finally disappeared in 2003, with the proclamation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Both became separate states in 2006 when Montenegro declared independence.

[15] Bojan Savić. "Where is Serbia? Traditions of Spatial Identity and State Positioning in Serbian Geopolitical Culture." *Geopolitics* 19, no. 3 (2014): 684-718; Sekulović, Dragoljub, and Gigović Ljubomir, "Evropska komponenta geopolitičkog položaja Srbije." *Vojno delo* 3 (2008).

with the region. To accomplish this goal, Russia and Turkey have been extensively using the mechanisms of soft power and energy politics to successfully increase their influence. Their activism in the region was alleviated by extended economic investments, cultural activities, mediation efforts, and an active approach of Russian and Turkish governments with related governmental and non-governmental organizations. Based on the proposed hypothesis, it will become clear that the tendencies of Russian and Turkish foreign policies are bound by strong political, cultural, and economic interests. Historical connections will be not ignored either, as they will be a signpost for better understanding of Russian and Turkish presence.

Although the space of Middle East and Eurasia occupies a major place in Russian and Turkish foreign policy agendas, particularly in the last decade, the Western Balkans have not been neglected. Russia and Turkey continued being present in this region closely following political processes and changes. We identify main elements in Turkish and Russian foreign politics for the time scope 2000-2014. This 14-year time frame has been chosen as relevant because as it will be shown, during this period an intensive use of combination of political, economic, and cultural tools has been evident in the foreign policy strategies of Russia and Turkey towards the region.

We divide this 14-year period into two sub periods, the first one from 2000-2009, and the second one from 2009-2014. The first nine years, represent the initial phase of changes in Russia, Turkey, and the Western Balkans. In the Western Balkans, the state-building process, and process of political and economic transition of countries was still on going. Russia was also going through a period of political consolidation and recovery from the decentralization of political institutions, economic transformation, etc., and sought to strengthen and restore its power, while Turkey also underwent a series of extensive political and economic changes. The transformation implied the formation of domestic and foreign policy on different grounds, and implementation of new strategy in relations with different countries and regions. One of those regions was the Balkans, in particular the Western Balkans, where both Russia and Turkey have been considered as the traditional realm of its influence. In the period 2009-2014, expanded range of Turkish and Russian presence was seen. This is a period when more evident and stronger political connections were established. As it will be shown, the number of bilateral visits was intensified, followed by the rise in the number of signed bilateral agreements. Increased economic investment has been noted, as well as attempts of mediation and increased activities of cultural-religious organizations

have been evident. Namely in Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu who was considered the architect of Turkish modern diplomacy and foreign policy, took the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. During Davutoğlu tenure as a minister, the (dis)continuity in Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans, namely in Serbia will be observed. When it comes to Russia, after 2008 and Kosovo's declaration of independence, political relations between Russia and Serbia have intensified. The question of Kosovo turned into one of the main anchors of Russian strong political presence in Serbia.

We finish our analysis with the year 2014 for two reasons. After 2014, Turkish and Russian foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans went in a different directions. The focus of Russian foreign policy on the Western Balkans after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, has intensified, became more assertive and was mainly based on the rivalry with the West. Russia was looking for different ways to obstruct and diminish Western presence in Europe, and the Western Balkans became one of the regions where Russia was fighting for supremacy against NATO. In Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu's departure from the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2014, indicated change in the formulation of Turkish foreign policy towards the region. Especially after the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, Turkish approach towards Western Balkans became increasingly focused on defence-security issues, tackling the problems of FETO networks.[16]

At the beginning of the 21st century, Serbia emerged as territorially the biggest state, thus the biggest economic market. Russia and Turkey immediately acknowledged the importance of Serbia as the key country in region of Western Balkans. Russian and Turkish presence in Serbia can neither be described as a typical rivalry nor cooperation, as both countries propagate their interests through the means of diplomatic and political manoeuvres, without any major confrontations. Serbia or "little Russia" in the Balkans, has been recognized as the traditional partner of Russia in the whole Balkans, no matter the circumstances. Therefore, it was expected that Russia would use Serbia as a foothold for the expansion of its policy in the region at the turn of political changes in the new century. Russia is using the reference to traditional friendship and brotherhood, Orthodoxy, related language, and culture as an important pillar to influence the shaping of Russian image in the Western Balkan countries. This kind of influence is most felt in Serbia, through representatives of

[16] FETO has been characterized as a terrorist organization in Turkey, that has the aim of destabilizing the Turkish state.

Orthodox churches, Russian cultural centres, and other organizations. With its natural geographical position, Serbia also started becoming one of the hubs for the gas and oil distribution of to the rest of the Balkan and Central European countries. Diversification of sources of oil and natural gas supply turned into one of the political and economic interests of Serbia, which coincided with Russian wider energy politics ambitions. Turkey also started using its influence, to exert a stronger political and economic influence in Serbia. When talking about Turkey and its influence for the Western Balkans, Bosnia is the first country that comes to one's mind. Despite the belief that Turkey in the Western Balkans has the best relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina, it may be a surprising fact that in economic terms Turkey has more advanced ties with Serbia than with Bosnia or any other Western Balkan country in the last decade. This is why the analysis of Serbian-Turkish relations will help us better understand political intentions of Turkey.

What connects Russian and Turkish involvement in Serbia, and Western Balkans in general, is a sense of superiority and conducting of politics in a centralized manner under the strong influence of the dominant figures of the presidents of the countries. For instance, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan are the two statesmen who are largely adored in the Western Balkans. But each of them has great popularity amongst the "targeted audience", Putin with Serbs in Serbia, Montenegro, Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Erdoğan with Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro.[17] It is not unusual to hear that the current establishment in Serbia is taking on elements of autocracy, and that President Aleksandar Vučić is increasingly being compared to Putin, Erdoğan and Viktor Orban, and their styles of governing. Therefore, we aim to show how the shift of governments also influenced Serbia to start getting closer to Russia and Turkey, and their political regimes.

1.2. The Research Design and Methods of Analysis

As the most useful method that will be used in the analysis of foreign policies of Russia and Turkey, comparative political analysis has been chosen. We chose this method because comparative analysis uses both descriptive dimension and analytical dimension while

[17] Dmitar Bechev. "Russia and Turkey in the Balkans Parallel Tracks", in *Rival power: Russia's influence in Southeast Europe*, Yale University Press, 2017, p. 53.

comparing political phenomena. Comparative analysis is focused on the analysis of similarities and differences between observed phenomenon, studies political systems and their actors and processes, but also explains the existing differences and similarities.[18] Using these approaches, comparative analysis has the goal to describe the similarities and differences of observed phenomena, to explain these differences, and to predict the factors that affect the existence of these differences and similarities. Additionally, comparative analysis includes the method of case study comparison, that will also be used in our research.[19] The case study method will give us a detailed analysis of Serbia at a descriptive and explicative level. As this method combines different analysis procedures, such as the use of statistical data, public opinion polls, different documentation, historical data, etc., the results obtained by this method will present a good input for conducting a comparative analysis. The advantage of the case study method is that by focusing on a single case, in our case Serbia, we can intensively examine the case even if our research resources are limited.[20] In the third chapter, the instruments of soft power that Turkey and Russia use in the Western Balkans will be compared, as well as energy capacities of Russia and Turkey in the region. Later in the chapter seven, Russian and Turkish foreign politic activities will be compared and analysed.

Using content analysis, we will examine the relevant literature for our topic, such as books, scientific articles, reports, and internet sources, available in English, Turkish, partially Russian, and Serbian languages. By combining literature in different languages, we aspire to provide an insight into a wider body of literature, thus contribute to the importance of our research.

Analysis of discourse will be used in examining speeches, statements and public appearances of statesmen and government officials, regarding Russian and Turkish relations with Western Balkans and Serbia. The analysis will be complemented by data from available statistical surveys and a search of a large number of websites.

[18] Zoran Krstić. "Comparative Politics: Theoretical and Methodological Review." Fakultet političkih nauka. Accessed August 27, 2022, http://www.uporednapolitika.net/prilozi/Komparativna-politika-teorijski-i-metodoloski-osvrt-Zoran-Krstic.pdf.
[19] Frank L. Wilson. *Concepts and issues in comparative politics: an introduction to comparative analysis*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 1996, p. 4.
[20] Arend Lijphart. "Comparative politics and the comparative method." *American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (1971): 682-693.

The aim of our study is to contribute to the literature dealing with the foreign policy of Russia and Turkey towards the Western Balkans. While most of the literature in Serbian for instance, is specifically focused either on relations between Russia and Western Balkans, and Turkey and Western Balkans, there is not much literature in English either that analyses parallelly Russian and Turkish influence in this region, in particular in Serbia. Therefore, our goal is to assess both Russian and Turkish policies towards this region, with special accent on Serbia, and provide an answer to what are the reasons of Russian and Turkish active presence in the Western Balkans.

1.3. Literature Review

In this part of the chapter, an overview of the main arguments in the academic literature is given, regarding the foreign policy formulation of Russia and Turkey towards the Western Balkans and Serbia, in the period 2000-2014. Available literature shows that due to their growing influence in international relations and global politics, Russia and Turkey returned to this region led by ambitions of being perceived as great powers. We define great power as a country that has the economic autonomy, acquired geo-strategic security, and military capability to affect changes in international relations.

1.3.1. Russian Foreign Policy and the Western Balkans

Russia which has been among the leading powers in international affairs throughout its history, has always been referred to as a global actor, even though it lost power at certain times due to political instability and economic difficulties. Its vast lands, rich history and culture, large natural resources, and its military capacity have kept it in the status of a 'great power'. So it is of no surprise that Russia wanted to reach the same status and place it thought it deserved in the international arena in the new century. After the geopolitical turmoil during the Cold War, and emergence of the West as the dominant party, Russia has been determined to secure its position and to be characterised again as a ‘great power’, by exerting its economic, political, and military capabilities. [21]

Vast body of literature on Russia elaborates that in the early 2000s, while Russia was undergoing an economic recovery, formulating foreign policy goals, and its new position in

[21] Andrei P. Tsygankov. “Russia's Power and Alliances in the 21st Century.” *Politics* 30 (2010): 43-51.

the international arena, accordingly Russian presence in the Balkans resurged.[22] Vladimir Putin's[23] arrival in the Kremlin marked the beginning of a period of pragmatic realism in Russian foreign policy, which was also reflected in the foreign policy formulation towards the Balkans.[24] The Western Balkans were seen a politically fragmented region, with multi-ethnic states that were politically unstable, which only created a convenient environment for Russia to spread its influence.[25] And Russia was trying to arise as a traditional protector and patron of the Western Balkan states.

Dimitar Bechev in his studies elaborates on Russia's position in the Western Balkans and Russian interest in this region. In the article, "Russia's strategic interests and tools of influence in the Western Balkans" he argues that Russia uses many different instruments and tools to assert its power in international arena, that vary from use of military power and economic ties to meddling in domestic politics of third countries, and use of propaganda to affect public opinion of these countries.[26] Particularly, in Western Balkans he outlines three tools used by the Russian establishment to accomplish its goals. These are coercion, co-optation, and subversion. He calls co-optation and subversion as "Russian instruments of choice" in the Western Balkans.[27] Co-optation refers to providing incentives to political elites in order to create political and economic leverage for Russia.[28] Here, Bechev gives the examples of good Russian relations with the political establishment in Serbia and Republic

[22] Stanislav Secrieru. "Russia in the Western Balkans: Tactical wins, strategic setbacks." European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2019.
[23] Vladimir Putin was appointed foreign intelligence officer to the Russian intelligence service, known as the KGB (Committee for State Security) during the Soviet era, later renamed the Federal Security Service (FSB). After working at various levels in this institution, he took office in the State Administration in 1997 and in the State Audit Administration in 1998. In 1998 and 1999, he worked as a secretary in the Russian Security Council as well as the head of the FSB. Fist he became the Russian prime minister, and then the President on 31 December 1999 with Boris Yeltsin's resignation. Putin served as the country's President from 1999 to 2008, and from 2012 until today. In the period 2008-2012, he served as the prime minister. See Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. "Vladimir Putin." Encyclopedia Britannica, Accessed January 29,2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Putin.
[24] To read more about realism of Russian foreign policy see Andrei, P. Tsygankov. *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity (3rd edn).* Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2013; Jeffrey Mankoff. *Russian foreign policy: the return of great power politics.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009; Alexander Dugin. *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right*. Arktos, 2014; Bobo Lo. *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy.* Oxford: Blackwell and Royal Institute for International Affairs, 2003.
[25] Hoxha, Abit, Arber, Ahmeti, and Agim Musliu. "Russian Influence in the Western Balkans. Carrot or Stick" in *Russia in the Balkans. Threat or Opportunity*, (pp.61-87) Lubin: Institute of East-Central Europe, 2014.
[26] Ibid., p.10.
[27] Ibid., p.11.
[28] Dimitar Bechev. "Russia's strategic interests and tools of influence in the Western Balkans." NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2019):1-35.

of Srpska, particularly in the field of security and defence, and economic dimension.[29] The tool of subversion is used to weaken and compromise opponents. In the Western Balkans those opponents are NATO, and recently EU whose enlargement Russia has been opposed to. As the last instrument out of these three is coercion, explains Bechev, which is referred to as a form of punishment, through economic and military means, which Russia is prone to using in other regions of interests. In his other studies, Bechev describes how Russia uses a number of other instruments in the Western Balkans, such as forming diplomatic alliances, security cooperation, humanitarian assistance, economic connections, religious ties, media influence.

Bechev argues that Russian influence in the Western Balkans is important, and that Russia is in a position to maintain its image of a great power, and the status of a spoiler of Western politics in the Balkans.[30] He describes Serbia as the country where the Russian influence exerted through the aforementioned instruments is most visible.

For Dušan Reljić, the most effective instrument of Russian influence in the Western Balkans, is Russia's position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This allows Russia to block all processes managed by the UN if they oppose Russia's political goals. Currently, Russia is using its status to block the recognition of Kosovo in the UN Security Council, which gives it leverage to exert bigger influence in Serbia.[31] Russia has been using the issue of Kosovo's status as a perfect opportunity for a closer rapprochement in relations with Serbia, but also to strengthen its own position in international relations.[32] The second factor is Russian cultural and political ties with the peoples and states of Southeast Europe, especially with those states of Orthodox religion. Slavic roots and Orthodox religion continue to play an important pillar in Russian foreign policy formulation, especially in the Western Balkans. As the third pillar of Moscow influence in the Western Balkans, Reljić outlines Russian growing economic interest in the region. Besides increased trade, and foreign direct investment in the region, Russian status as the leading energy

[29] Dimitar Bechev. "Russia Playing a weak hand well." In *The Western Balkans in the World,* eds. Florian Bieber and Nikolaos Tzifakis, (pp.187-204). London: Routledge, 2019.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Dušan Reljić. "The impact of Russia." In *Resilience in the Western Balkans*, eds. Sabina Lange, Zoran Nechev, and Florian Trauner, Florian. Paris: EUISS Report No.36, (August 2017):43-50.
[32] Ibid.

supplier has been brought to the fore. The growth of Russia's economic importance has opened new space for Moscow to realize its political interests in that region.[33]

Reljić evaluates that Russian increased presence in the Western Balkans was mostly felt in Serbia. This was especially seen after 2005, when the disputes regarding the final status of Kosovo intensified, which coincided with Russian extend economic interest in Serbia. He writes that Russian involvement in Serbian political affairs has led a decline in approval for EU membership amongst the population.[34] The author elaborates on close relations between Russian and Serbian establishment, especially on the issue of Kosovo's status. In his words, "With the exception of Russia, Belgrade did not have another relevant political ally on the international scene at that time."[35]

For Sonja Biserko, one of the leading Serbian academics on Russian-Serbian relations, Balkans was no longer a priority in Russia's foreign policy, as it was in the previous century. However, Biserko argues that Russian interest to significantly influence events in the Western Balkans has not decreased. Russian presence is still noticeable and manifests itself in various ways.[36] Russia's expansion into the Western Balkans in the new century took place at a time when the countries in the region were unconsolidated and with many unsolved national and identity questions, therefore subject to influence and pressure of other powers. Biserko explains that Russia began to develop instruments of public diplomacy with the aim of simultaneously strengthening the effect of soft power. And as a strategically important point towards Europe, in the eyes of Kremlin, Serbia was recognized as a suitable ground on which the growing power of Russia would be successfully manifested.[37] Russia acts from the position of a country that is fighting to return to the international stage, and the energy wealth it possesses allows it to become a great power with substantial financial resources, Biserko says. She also argues that Russia is guided by the fact that Slavic identity is superior to Western European values.[38]

[33] Dušan Reljić. "Rusija i Zapadni Balkan." Beograd: ISAC fund, 2009., p.22.
[34] Ibid., p.11.
[35] Ibid., p.10.
[36] Sonja Biserko. "Russia and its influence in the Balkans." In *The Power of Personal Responsibility*, 267-299. Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

1.3.2. Turkish Foreign Policy and the Western Balkans

Turkey's foreign policy activities since 2002 represented a period of swift developments and changes, whereas Turkey's visibility and international reputation have certainly improved over the last decade. As Turkey was becoming economically and politically stronger, Turkish foreign policy approach also became more proactive, spanning from the Middle East and Caucasus and the Balkans.[39] Authors widely argue that a variety of factors have contributed to the change of dynamics in Turkish foreign policy. One of those factors was the change of domestic politics and emergence of the Justice and Development Party (JDP)[40] and its consistent electoral success on Turkish political scene.

An undeniable fact is that in less than two decades, JDP has made significant reforms in Turkey. After winning the parliamentary elections in November 2002, JDP formed the government, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [41] became Prime Minister of the Republic the following year. In a short period, Erdoğan together with Abdullah Gül, who was the co-founder of JDP, and Ahmet Davutoğlu, made a turnaround in Turkey.[42] They introduced reforms that positively affected the country's economic growth, strengthening infrastructure, increasing the number of employees, reducing the government deficit, etc. At the same time, relations with the EU deepened, culminating in the beginning of accession in 2005. The transformations took place not only in interior affairs but also in foreign affairs, consequently affecting the discourse of Turkish foreign policy, thus increasing Turkish regional and global role. There is no doubt that the JDP's consecutive electoral success from 2002 generated Turkey's political reform.[43] Defining itself as a centre-right party, although often criticized

[39] Erhan Türbedar. "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139-158.
[40] In Turkish Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP.
[41] Recep Tayyip Erdoğan started his political career in 1980s. In 1985 he was elected the Istanbul Provincial Head of the Welfare Party and became a member of the Central Executive Board of the Welfare Party. He won the local elections and became the Mayor of Istanbul in 1994. His term ended when in 1997, he was sent to prison for reading a poem that "incited religious hatred". In 2001, Erdoğan founded a new party, the JDP, and he was elected the General Chairman of the Party. Due to the previous conviction, he could not take the post before a constitutional amendment was made in 2002, after what Erdoğan became the Prime Minister 2003-2014. In 2014, Erdoğan was elected the President of the Republic and he still holds the post. See President of the Republic of Turkey. "Biography." Accessed May 28, 2022, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/receptayyiperdogan/biography/.
[42] Abdullah Gül served as a Prime Minister 2002-2003, Foreign Minister 2003-2007, after what he took the post of the President of the Republic 2007- 2014. Ahmet Davutoğlu served as the chief foreign policy adviser of Erdoğan's government until 2009, when he became the Foreign Minister for the period 2009-2014.
[43] Öktem, Kerem, Kadıoğlu, Ayşe, and Karlı, Mehmet. *Another Empire?: A decade of Turkey's Foreign Policy under the Justice and Development party.* Istanbul: Bilgi Universitesi Yayınları, 2012.

and characterized as an "Islamic" party[44], the JDP has proven to be the most suitable political force that could successfully manage Turkey's complex transformation process.[45]

Consequentially, Turkey's foreign policy strategy towards the Western Balkans as one of the regions in the immediate vicinity, was also redefined. Turkish foreign policy became more ambitious, with an increased emphasis on the use of soft power and public diplomacy. Different authors differently define and analyse Turkish foreign policy towards the Western Balkans.

For Erhan Türbedar, Turkey's proactive stance and multi-dimensional foreign policy had two goals: to make peace with the neighbouring countries, and to act as a mediator between conflicting countries in the neighbourhood. Turkey's decision-makers engaged into creating a vision that would enhance Turkey as a regional and global power. Türbedar argues that the growing Turkish influence was most evident in the Western Balkans, and he interprets five reasons of Turkish intensified engagement in the region. Those are: joint history, geography, economic presence, the human factor, and Turkish endeavour to secure allies in the region.[46] Türbedar argues that joint history and human connections represent effective factors for improved regional cooperation between Turkey and Western Balkans. Centuries of common life at the same territories has helped create a strong bond between Turkish and Balkan nations, in the first place, Muslim communities. This bond was further strengthened by big migrations that took place in the late 19th/early 20th century from the Balkans to Turkey, which led to the creation of a large Balkan diaspora in Turkey. Under the geography factor, Türbedar implies that any instability in the Western Balkans can immediately affect the political stability in Turkey. Thereby, ensuring peace and stability is one of the most important tasks of Turkish policy. This has laid the foundation for establishment of peace mechanisms between Western Balkan countries and Turkey. That being the case, Turkey wanted to prove that achieving peace in the Western Balkans is not possible without Turkish involvement, which went in favour of Turkish strategy of becoming a great power.

[44] JDP was constituted as one of two parties emerging from the constitutionally banned Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi), an Islamist political party founded in 1997, whose work was abolished in 2001 by the Constitutional Court for violating secular provisions of the Constitution. Over the time AKP started losing the reformist character it has shown when it was founded, and slowly started (especially after the Arab Spring) obtaining the characteristics of an Islamist party.

[45] Keyman, E. Fuat and Şebnem Gümüşçü. "Constructing Hegemony: The AKP Rule." In *Democracy, Identity and Foreign Policy in Turkey* (pp. 29-44). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014., p. 43.

[46] Erhan Türbedar. "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139-158., p. 140-142.

Türbedar points out that one of the essential outcomes of Turkey's active engagement in the Western Balkans was improving relations with Serbia, that have been strained since the conflict in Yugoslavia in the '90s. After 2002, a visible amelioration in bilateral ties between Serbia and Turkey was characterized by high-level visits and evolving economic ties. Especially, Turkish businessmen have shown great interest in investing in Serbia. Further in his article, the author points out that Turkish official often emphasized the importance of Serbia as the key country in the Western Balkans for preserving peace and stability.[47] Without Serbian and Turkish cooperation in the region, stable political dialogue cannot be achieved. Türbedar concludes that even though increased Turkish involvement in the region has raised insinuations and concerns on Turkish Neo-Ottoman intentions, specifically in Serbia, they are completely unjustified and irrational.

As the main limitations in Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans, author lists mistrust and prejudices inside the region, and lack of Turkish cooperation with the West. Under the lack of cooperation with the West, he refers to the situation where it would be inaccurate to believe Turkey is competing with the EU in the Western Balkans, as Turkey is openly supporting European integration of the Western Balkan states. He adds that Turkish engagement shouldn't be seen as a threat to the EU, on the contrary, Western Balkans should become the realm of cooperation between EU and Turkey.[48] The other issue the author underlines is the existing prejudices on Turkey. Modern Turkish relations with the countries of Westen Balkans are built on the centuries old historical relations, and perceptions of the Ottoman history and heritage. Countries with a predominantly Muslim population like Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania, have positive memories about the Ottoman presence in this region, while the situation is completely different in Montenegro, or Serbia where the population is mainly Christian. The scepticism towards Turkey that exists in some countries has not been overcome yet, explains Türbedar.[49]

Similar concepts are found in Ekinci's analyses, who outlines Turkey's relations regarding the Western Balkans as geostrategic, economic, and socio-cultural.[50] Ekinci argues the Western Balkan region has always been an important region for Turkish foreign policy makers, but it was not until after 2002 when an increased interest and commitment to the

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Mehmet Uğur Ekinci. "Turkey's 'Zero Problem' Era in the Balkans." SETA no. 1, October 2013.

region was noticed. He describes the period since the mid-2000s, as the "golden age" of developing economic and diplomatic relations between Turkey and Western Balkans.[51] For Ekinci geostrategic, economic, and socio-cultural approach was not new in Turkish Balkan foreign policy. He asserts that it was just used more vigorously by the JDP government, in order to play a more active foreign policy in the region.

Rapidly developing relations between Turkey and the Western Balkans were the result of "zero problems with neighbours" foreign policy strategy, explains Ekinci.[52] He argues that the 'zero problems with neighbours' policy brought a visible boost in inter-governmental and economic relations, social ties were deepened and Turkish image in general became more positive.[53] Ekinci especially emphasizes the dynamics of economic relations, and the numbers he provides in the article help create a clearer picture of Turkish economic engagement in the region. Additionally, Turkish non state actors and businessmen have contributed to improving Turkish image and credibility.

The intellectual architect of the "zero problems with neighbours" foreign policy strategy, was Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu who insisted on a more active re-engagement of Turkey with the regions with whom it had shared cultural and political heritage. As an academic, Davutoğlu further outlined his new foreign policy vision in his book "Strategic Depth" and continued to explain and develop his ideas in his numerous speeches, interviews, and magazines. What many scholars agree upon is that this strategic depth became the anchor of Turkish foreign policy, emphasizing that strategic depth is reflected in Turkish historical and geographical greatness. Thanks to the Ottoman legacy, Turkey can utilize it to broaden its influence and power by using geographical and historical proximity with the neighbouring regions.[54]

[51] Mehmet Uğur Ekinci. "A Golden Age of Relations: Turkey and the Western Balkans During the AK Party Period." *Insight Turkey* 16, no. 1 (2014): 103–125., p. 115.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Davutoğlu's strategic depth concept constituted of several mechanisms. First mechanism is integrated foreign policy approach, which meant that Turkey had the capability to conduct a multiple regional politics from Middle East to the Balkans. Second mechanism meant a more pro-active foreign policy line, while third implied Turkish "presence on the ground." Fourth and fifth mechanism envisioned an all-inclusive foreign policy, meaning all relevant actors should be included in the new foreign policy vision. See Bülent Aras. "The Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy." *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (2009): 127–142.

Davutoğlu himself underlines this fact:

"Turkey's geography gives it a special status of a central country and should not be seen as a country of bridges that only connects two points, nor as a border country; Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country at the same time, and this central position, in the midst of a huge Afro-Eurasian land mass, gives it the opportunity to maneuverer in several regions simultaneously."[55]

In Birgül Demirtaş's work it is outlined that although the ambitions of Turkish regional policy remained the same, different instruments have been used in the implementation of the foreign policy under JDP administration. Demirtaş argues that Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans was no longer based exclusively on political-security concerns, as it was the case during the '90s. In the new century, as a result of a more confident and independently-led politics, Turkish establishment started using soft power instruments in its foreign policy strategy. Particularly in the Western Balkan region, an increased use of economic and cultural instruments has been seen.[56] The author elaborates on the increase of Turkish trade volume and foreign direct investment in the region, but adds that despite a notable increase, the numbers of total trade and FDI were still considerably low. When it comes to cultural ties as a mean of soft power politics, Demirtaş writes about language and establishment of language centres across the Western Balkans; increased interest and presence of Turkish media; popularity of Turkish TV soaps; availability of Turkish scholarships for Balkan students and transnationalism, movement of people and civil societies. Under transnationalism she refers to the increasing mobility of people from the Western Balkans to Turkey, and initiatives of civil societies in the areas in Turkey where people of Balkan origin reside.[57]

[55] Ahmet Davutoğlu. "Stratejik Derinlik Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu". Istanbul: Küre, 2009., p.79.
[56] Birgül Demirtaş. "Turkey and the Balkans: Overcoming prejudices, building bridges and constructing a common future." *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2013): 163-184.
[57] Ibid., p.177-179.

She concludes that that are four limitations of Turkish foreign policy approach in the Western Balkans.[58] Fist limitation is excessive reminiscing of the Ottoman past. Here she refers to Davutoğlu's rhetoric about Turkish historical and geographical uniqueness, that triggered Neo-Ottoman tendencies and ambitions of the JDP government. This, in her opinion, is not in line with the European foreign policy path. Second limitation is that Turkish establishment doesn't seem to take much into account the response and local perceptions on Turkish engagement in the countries in question. She gives the example of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, two countries that responded differently to Turkish foreign policy approach. Third limitation is the increasing authoritarian ambitions of JDP government, that has put Turkey into a road of "de-democratization."[59] As the main challenge for Turkey, remains to show that is able to "manage to institutionalise its democratic structures."[60] Fourth limitation is de-Europeanization of Turkish domestic politics.

1.4. Organization of the Chapters

This study consists of seven chapters, including introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter general information about the region of Western Balkans are given, whereas Russia and Turkey as the main actors whose influence will be analysed throughout the study, are presented. The scope and the objectives of the study, including a literature overview are presented as well. Second chapter summarizes the interests of Russia and Turkey in the Western Balkans. This chapter provides the key arguments why this region in particular has been in the focus of attention of Russian and Turkish foreign policy agendas. Third chapter compares and analyses instruments Turkey and Russia use in the implementation of their foreign policy towards the Western Balkans. Here our main argument will be presented. By analysing the foreign policy instruments, a comparison of Russian and Turkish foreign policies will be made, and it will be shown how active foreign policy contributes to creation of the image of Russia and Turkey as great powers in the region. In the fourth chapter, the case of Serbia is presented. Here, the fundamental points on Serbia's position in the international relations are given, including the assessment of political changes that Serbia

[58] Birgül Demirtaş. "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan ties: Opportunities and limitations." In *Turkish foreign policy* ed. Gözen Ercan (pp. 129-149), Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
[59] Ibid., p. 144.
[60] Ibid., p. 144.

was going through in the relevant period. This is followed by an extensive assessment of Russian-Serbian relations in the fifth chapter, and Turkish-Serbian relations in the sixth chapter, respectively. Russian-Serbian, and Turkish-Serbian relations are analysed on political, cultural-historical, and economic level for the relevant time period. Besides the positive aspects of their relationship, the obstacles Russia and Turkey face in Serbia will be additionally discussed. In the seventh chapter comparison of Russian and Turkish activities in Serbia is provided, followed by an overall conclusion.

2. GROWING RUSSIAN AND TURKISH INTERESTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In the last decade, scholars and experts have been talking about Russia's and Turkey's return to the Western Balkans, in particular the growth of their economic, cultural, and political influence in the region. This chapter gives an overview of the Turkish and Russian growing interests in the Western Balkans, that have been apparent in the last decades. As it was described in the previous chapter, Russian and Turkish foreign policy has changed in the new century, which implied the change of the political course in the Western Balkans. This region was once again found on their political agendas. In this chapter it will be showcased which factors made this region a field of interest for Turkey and Russia, and what will be evident is that both Russian and Turkish approach is not based on single policy instrument but incorporate variation of other instruments.

2.1. Russia and the Western Balkans

"Russia and Western Balkans have a romantic relationship" it was stated not so long ago by Duma state deputy.[61] Russian influence in the Western Balkans has been present throughout history with less or more intensity, but with a recognizable continuity. Even at the times when it wasn't an affecting actor who influenced the political and social events in the Western Balkans, Russia was present in efforts to keep alive the idea of Russia as a great power and protector in the region. The current Russian interests stayed almost unchanged: to achieve economic, political, and cultural presence in the Western Balkans. Hence, by accomplishing these goals Russia wanted to maintain the image of a great power. Russian foreign policy in the Western Balkans, for the time period that is the focus of our research (2000-2014) is distinguished by three main aspects: **identity politics** based on historical and cultural closeness, **economic politics** mainly based on energy politics, and **Russian expansionism** (Russian search of the great power status in the region).

[61] Cited in Eleonora Ambrosetti. "Russian Soft Power in the Balkans: A True Love Story?" *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*. April 19, 2019, Accessed June 17, 2022, https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/russian-soft-power-balkans-true-love-story-22845.

2.1.1. Historical and Cultural Connections

For the analysis of the Russian strategy towards the Western Balkans, it is important to elaborate on the historical genesis of relations. Russian traditional historical presence in the Western Balkans dates back to the Middle Ages, and it was accompanied by varying intensities of Russian political, economic, and especially cultural, humanitarian, and spiritual influence. The ties on which the relations between the Russian tsarist regime and the Western Balkan countries were based was the liberation of the Christian people from the Ottoman rule.[62]. At times such relationship was exaggerated to such an extent that it took on a form of mythological character, with Russia portrayed as the superior power and the 'saviour' of the Slavic-Orthodox people.[63] The strong influence of Russian Church, and the historical importance of Moscow as the centre of Orthodox Christianity was expressed through the idea of Moscow as "Third Rome" after the fall of Constantinople.[64]

Doubtlessly, Russia fought for its status in the Balkans by traditional means, but mostly by spiritual and cultural activities. It is argued by many scholars that historically, Russia has sought to satisfy several important interests within its Balkan policy. The first interest was strategic and was related to the imperial policy of Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries.[65] During this period, the Western Balkans were seen as an extremely important region when it came to the security of Russian borders. Another interest was related to the religion and culture.[66] The emergence of the idea of *Pan-Slavism* at the beginning of the 19th century, which aimed at the cultural, religious, and political unification of the Slavic people in Europe, only strengthened Russian presence and became one of driving forces of Russian foreign policy in the Balkans. Nikolai Danilevsky, a prominent Russian historian, came up with the idea of Pan-Slavism, based on the myth of Slavic solidarity and brotherhood amongst Orthodox Slavs.[67] The Pan-Slavic movement in Russia, gathered a significant number of intellectuals, and thus gained influence in official circles of other countries in the first place Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro.

[62] See more in, Stevan K. Pavlović. *Istorija Balkana.* Beograd: Clio, 2001.
[63] Jelica Kurjak. *Ruska politika na Balkanu.* Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1999.
[64] Moscow as Third Rome was an ideological and religious concept where Russia claimed that it was the heiress of the Roman Empire.
[65] Jelica Kurjak. *Ruska politika na Balkanu.* Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1999.
[66] See more in James Headley. *Russia and the Balkans: Foreign Policy from Yeltsin to Putin*. London: Hurst Publishers, 2008.
[67] Vladislav Sotirović. "Russia's Balkan Politics: From the Politics of Pan-Slavic Reciprocity of the Tsarist Russia to the "Realpolitik" of the Republic of Gazprom Russia." *Sprska politička misao 1* (2016):83-109.

The creation of the Soviet Union (USSR) did not significantly change the priorities of the Russian foreign policy strategy. The Western Balkans remained in the sphere of primary interests, and unlike in the 19th century when the ideological bases of exercising influence were Pan-Slavism and Orthodoxy, in the 20th century the new basis of Russian influence was the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.[68] Despite the changes in the ideological background, the state interest was above all in the Russian approach.[69] The main strategic effort was to exploit the post-World War II geopolitical vacuum, and to expand Soviet influence in the Western Balkans.[70] However, the distancing of Yugoslavia under the leadership of Tito from the Soviet leadership, led to a conflict in 1948, and severance of relations between Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

The changes that took place in Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet state, the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, and fall of communism that resulted in a radical orientation towards the liberal-democratic course of society, affected the character of Russian foreign policy.[71] In the first years after the collapse of the Soviet state, Russia was trying to get as close as possible to the Western states. That was best seen in the Russian attitude towards to the crisis in Yugoslavia, which at that time was one of the important issues on Russian foreign policy agenda. In that period, the idea of Russia as an 'eternal ally' was especially insisted on in Serbia and in some traditionalist intellectual circles in Russia. In the analysis of Russian approach towards Yugoslavia, it is valuable to note that Russia officially advocated for preserving the integrity of Yugoslavia and resolving disputes peacefully by political and diplomatic means, but in reality, it adapted its attitudes and behaviours according to the policies of its Western European partners.[72] Because of the social, economic, social and political problems, Russia was deprived of taking a more decisive and serious role in resolving the crisis in Yugoslavia, which meant giving up its traditional principles in the Western Balkans for a certain period.[73]

[68] Jelica Kurjak. *Ruska politika na Balkanu.* Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1999.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] By 1995, Russia became a member of almost all political and economic institutions o the EU, and even joined the NATO Partnership for Peace Program.
[72] Russia even approved the sanctions against Serbia, and the establishment of International War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.
[73] Similarly in the Kosovo crisis, one of the most important elements that influenced the character of Russia's attitude towards the Kosovo crisis concerned its limited political, economic, and military resources. Therefore, Russia was not ready to make major compromises within the Contact Group when decisions towards the conflict in Kosovo were formulated. The most characteristic example of such behaviour is related to the decision to bomb Yugoslav military facilities after the failed negotiations in Rambouillet in 1999. Russia

2.1.2. Economic Politics

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the collapse of the socialist state system, most of the Western Balkan countries were going through a period of economic changes. Russia saw this as a good opportunity to create an environment where it could ensure a strategic role, thus reach out to the rest of the European markets. Increasing economic presence eventually affected the political visibility of Russia in the region. Russia used the distinct relations it had with each Western Balkan country to increase its influence through trade and substantial investments. Expectedly, Russia found traditional partners in governments of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republic of Srpska).[74] It can be noted that Russia was choosing predominantly Orthodox countries with whom has historical-cultural ties, as destinations for economic investment. Data shows that Russia has the best economic ties with Serbia, which will be elaborated in detail in chapter five.

If we take at the table below (table 1), increased Russian economic presence in the Western Balkans can be noticed after 2002. Already in 2005, the first gas stations of the Russian oil giant *Lukoil* were opened in Serbia. This was an event that was recognized as the initial signal for Russia's "economic offensive in the Western Balkans."[75] The period 2000-2014, can rightly be called a period of strengthening, expanding, and qualitatively improving economic ties between Russia and the countries of the Western Balkans.[76] Among the important spheres of Russia's investment activity in Western Balkans are the following: the energy sector, which mainly accounts for Russian investments, then infrastructure, the banking sector, real estate, and tourism.

strongly condemned the NATO bombing and, together with China, proposed a resolution to stop further escalation of the war, but its ideas did not receive the support of other members of the Security Council. See Jelica Kurjak. *Ruska politika na Balkanu. Beograd*: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1999.

[74] Republic of Srpska is one of the two entities in Bosnia. According to the Dayton Accords from 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entitites that have their own governing bodies and government: *Bosnia Herzegovina Federation, and Republic of Srpska.* In Republic of Srpska, 83% of the population are Serbs, while Bosnia Herzegovina Federation is mainly ihabited by ethnic Bosniaks and Croats.

[75] Stevo Pašalić. "Russia and the Western Balkans from geopolitical, demographic and economic perspective." *Politeia* 2, no. 3 (2012): 163-176., p. 167.

[76] Maksakova, A. Marija, and G. Galina Tyapko. "Saradnja Rusije i zemalja Zapadnog Balkana u savremenoj etapi: mogućnosti, rizici i perspektive." *Argumenti* 27 (2016): 71-89.

Table 1. Trade volume between Western Balkans and Russia 2001-2014 (US dollars in million)

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014
Volume trade	935	1.437	2.652	4.160	3.600	5.491	4.508	4.333	4.607
Imports	842	1.290	2.402	3.677	3.208	4.618	3.562	3.190	3.472
Exports	94	147	250	483	393	874	946	1.143	1.135

Source: Maksakova, A. Marija, and G. Galina, Tyapko. "Saradnja Rusije i zemalja Zapadnog Balkana u savremenoj etapi: mogućnosti, rizici i perspektive." *Argumenti* 27 (2016), p. 73.

However, economic influence started decreasing after 2014/2015, bringing Russia from "the region's top economic partner at the beginning of the century, to single digits today." For instance, in 2018, Russian total trade with the Western Balkan was not even $3 billion ($2.964 billion), as only 4.7% of foreign trade was done with Russia.[77] Apart from the energy and oil sector, Russian economic presence in Western Balkans was seemingly decreasing.[78]

Western Balkans are regarded as an important region for the supply of Russian gas and oil to the European market. Russian oil giant *Lukoil* is the leading supplier of crude oil and fuel in the Western Balkans, while *Gazprom* dominates the natural gas market.[79] The region is seen as a hub for Russian gas, and through such cooperation, Russia maintains present in Europe. Western Balkan's potential as a transit route and as high-volume energy consuming market, made this region very valuable. For Russia, it was of strategic interest to put its energy products on the European market, and the main practical instruments for achieving this goal were oil and gas pipelines. The latest project, *Turk Stream* inaugurated in 2020, is supposed to create a more stable energy situation in the region, increase Russian influence, and by reaching the Central European market through the Balkans, it should realize an important part of Russian broader geostrategic plan.

[77] The first trading partner was EU, with $57 billion total trade volume. See Valbona Zeneli. "Dancing in the Dark. The West, China and Russia in the Western Balkans." Washington D.C., Marshall Centre, 2020: 23-29.
[78] Marta Szpala. "Russia in Serbia–soft power and hard interests." OSW Commentary no.150 (2014): 1-8.
[79] Stevo Pašalić. "Russia and the Western Balkans from geopolitical, demographic and economic perspective." *Politeia* 2, no. 3 (2012): 163-176., p.167.

2.1.3. Claim of Russian Great Power Status

Russia has always had great political and strategic ambitions in the Western Balkans, which were seen in its imperialist policy during the previous centuries. These ambitions remained the same at the beginning of the 21st century, when Russia returned to the region of Western Balkan, with the aim of once again being one of the main actors in the area that it traditionally considers its sphere of influence.

Russia sees its uniqueness in the Western Balkans through Orthodox religion and Slavism. Orthodoxy and Slavism were the spiritual framework of imperial Russia, and it can be said that this is also the political framework of Russia's foreign policy since Vladimir Putin came to power. In this context one can look at the contemporary relations between Russia and the countries of the Western Balkans, and Russia's attitude towards open political issues in the Balkans. In the shaping of Russian new foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, religion takes a key role, as religion is considered to be the backbone of Russian traditional politics. In addition, Orthodox religion is perceived as the historical foundation of Russia through which the power is to be rebuilt. Without Orthodoxy, there is no great Russia.

Also, with Putin's leadership and his foreign policy style, Russia has tried to show itself as a great power that cannot be left aside when it comes to important strategic decisions. Especially in the realm of the Western Balkans. Russia, guided by the old glory and imperial mentality, still considers itself a global great power. And to ensure political dominance in the Western Balkans, Russia sought establishing support from the ruling political parties from the targeted countries, in particular Serbia, Montenegro, and Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina). It did so by primarily using different means of soft power such as propaganda and cultural-religious influence, and strong influence of the Russian Orthodox church.

When analysing Russian approach towards the Western Balkans, EU and NATO presence in the region cannot be neglected. All of the Western Balkan countries openly defined their policies as pro-European, with the ultimate goal of full EU membership. Except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, all of the Western Balkan countries have received their

candidate statuses. Most of these countries, parallelly started integrating into NATO structures, with Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania becoming member states.[80]

The Euro-Atlantic integration process of Western Balkans has led to an increased political and strategic interest of Russia in the region. Russia wanted to create a zone of influence in the Western Balkans to counterbalance the countries' orientation towards NATO and the EU. Despite promises of membership, since 2013 and the last enlargement of the Union when Croatia joined, none of the Western Balkan countries became a member of the Union. Regardless of many years of efforts and millions of euros spent into investing into the region, European integration of the Western Balkans, has slowed down. This worked in favour of Russia, who wanted to prove that neither NATO nor the EU are credible partners to the Western Balkan countries.[81]

This argument can be confirmed if we take a look at some of the statements of Russian high-level officials. For example, the Russian Ambassador in Belgrade Alexander Chepurin in 2013, declared that Russia "does not object to Serbia's accession to the EU per se", however "NATO membership, was a red line that in no way suits Russia."[82] In Montenegro, for instance Russia went beyond rhetoric. The same year in 2015 when Montenegro officially received a formal invitation to join NATO, fierce criticism was seen from the Russian side, and a spokesman for President Putin said that Montenegro's accession would result in "retaliatory actions." In 2016 Russia was accused of being involved in the attempt of coup in Montenegro, together with a group of nationalists from Serbia. It was believed that Russia, by planning to topple the pro-Western government wanted to prevent Montenegro's accession to NATO.[83] Moscow failed deterring Montenegro from entering

[80] Albania became NATO member state in 2009, Montenegro in 2017, North Macedonia in 2020.

[81] Amid the rising Russian influence, in 2018 European Commission stated that 2025 was the indicative year for the Western Balkan countries to become members of the Union. Bartunek, Robert-Jan, and Robin Emmott. "EU opens door to Balkans with 2025 target for membership." Reuters, February 6, 2018, Accessed August 16, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-balkans-idUSKBN1FQ1XE.

[82] Cited in Branislav Radeljić. "Russia's Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing Its Own Influence in Europe?." *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 6, no. 2 (2017): 273-300, p. 297.

[83] Russia and Montenegro share centuries-long historical, cultural, and diplomatic relations since the 18th century. Throughout history these two countries were always considered allies. After Montenegro's independence, Russia was one of the main investors in Montenegro, with tourism and economic ties flourishing. In the period 2008-2013, Montenegro was a key point for Russian investment and Russian influence was so vast, Montenegro was commonly called 'Moscow by the sea'. In 2012, the Russian press wrote that Russian citizens owned as much as 40% of real estate on the Montenegrin coast, and in 2013 the Central Bank of Russia announced that one third of foreign investments in Montenegro, which amounted to 1.1 billion US dollars, came from Russia. In that light, Russia has also tried to exert political influence eventually trying to advert the country from joining NATO. Russian diplomacy was loudly against Montenegro's entry into the NATO pact, as they were hoping to prevent the last section of the Adriatic coast

NATO, as Montenegro officially became the 29th member of the Alliance in 2017. This meant Montenegrin absolute distance from Russia and its politics.

Similar reaction was seen when North Macedonia applied for NATO membership, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov blamed the West for meddling in internal affairs of the Balkan countries.[84] For Russia, Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkan states will mean diminished Russian role in the region. Russia is trying to prevent that by undermining NATO and EU, and experts often describe Russian policies in the Balkan as "disruptive policy and policy of spoiling" against EU and NATO.[85]

The described examples show that Russia was returning to the Western Balkans with tactical moves, and it was using them to establish stronger influence. This was also an indication of Russian aspiration to acquire the status of a great power, through the Western Balkan countries with which it had established historical, religious, traditional, and cultural connections.

2.2. Turkey and the Western Balkans

Since JDP came to power in 2002, the new government reoriented Turkey's foreign policy in a more liberal direction. Turkey's new foreign policy has paid special attention to direct relations with neighbouring countries, and it was focused on trade and cooperation and multilateralism and mediation in conflict resolution.[86] What many authors have discussed on, and what will be supported further in our study is that within this new proactive foreign policy of Turkey, the regional policy towards the Western Balkans was re-defined.

As it was the case with Turkish foreign policy in general, the main architect of Turkish foreign policy towards the Western Balkans was Ahmet Davutoğlu. For Davutoğlu, relations between Turkey and Balkans in general, were based on centuries-old historical and

to come under the NATO umbrella. However, after 2014, and Russian annexation of Crimea, Montenegro sided with the Western countries, condemning the act, and joining the sanctions imposed against Russia. See Antonio Violante. "Under Pressure: The Impact of Russian Toursim Investement in Montenegro." In *Tourism and Geopolitics: Issues and Concepts from Central and Eastern Europe,* ed. Derek Hall, (pp. 87-96). Wallingford: CABI, 2017., p. 90-93.; Dmitar Bechev. "The 2016 Coup Attempt in Montenegro: Is Russia's Balkans Footprint Expanding?" *Foreign Policy Research Institute,* April 2018.

[84] Vsevolod Samokhvalov. "Russia in the Balkans: Great Power Politics and Local Response." *Insight Turkey* 21, no. 2 (2019): 189–210.

[85] Ibid., p. 193.

[86] Gerard Bertrand. "Turkish Diplomacy since 2003: Transition from Realpolitik to a Liberal Foreign Policy?" *Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (2013), 63-82.

cultural ties that arose from the period of the Ottoman Empire.[87] For him, links between Western Balkan and Turkish Muslim communities are of utter importance, as Muslims see Turkey as a "model country."[88]

In his study, "A Forward Looking Vision for the Balkans", when he already obtained the post of the Foreign Minister, Davutoğlu defined main political principles towards the Western Balkans: regional ownership, and all-inclusiveness; regional re-integration; the process of European integration; and position in regional and global organizations.[89] Regional ownership and all-inclusiveness implied that the nations of the Balkan countries represent a family consisting of strong cultural and social ties. For Davutoğlu this indicated the need of developing more regional initiatives to strengthen cooperation. In relation to that, he described the Trilateral Mechanisms between Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey, as "a historic step." Second principle, regional re-integration suggested that bilateral and multilateral political dialogue within the Balkan region should be held on a regular basis. As an alternative to "micro-level division, macro-level integration should be reinforced."[90] For instance, instead of one annual meeting, South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) should have two or three summits, similar to the EU mechanisms.[91] As for the third concept, the process of European integration, for Davutoğlu, the future of the Balkans is shaped by the future of Europe, and vice versa. EU should become a more multicultural, politically, and strategically significant world actor. The Balkans also should work together to show that they are ready to be part of EU, and that instead of being a 'burden', they will be an important asset to the Union. Fourth principle, Balkan's position in the regional and global organizations should be addressed more seriously. Davutoğlu asserts that no intra-Balkan consultation mechanism currently exists in the UN, and that is a subject that should be worked on. Additionally, forming such kind of mechanism within NATO, would also be very fruitful. For Davutoğlu not having an active foreign policy in the Western Balkans, would mean the prevail of other countries power and influence, such as the Orthodox/Slav

[87] Nevenka Jeftić-Šarčević. "Zapadni Balkan u projekciji Turske strateške vizije." *Međunarodni Problemi* 62, no. 4 (2010): 691-714.
[88] Darko Tanasković. "Turkey and the Balkans: Old Traditions, New Aspirations." *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2012): 51-62.
[89] Ahmet Davutoğlu. "A Forward Looking Vision for the Balkans." SAM Center for Strategic Research, no. 1 (2011): 3-10.
[90] Ibid., p. 7.
[91] Ibid., p. 7.

influence.[92] Therefore Turkey should embark upon the policy of a great power to ensure its strategic position.[93]

Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans, for the time period that is the focus of our research is characterized by three main features: **identity politics** (historical and cultural connections), **economic politics,** and **Turkish role as a mediator**.

2.2.1. Historical Ties

Turkish engagement in the Western Balkans nowadays is primarily related to their relations throughout history. The historical ties between Turkey and the Western Balkans are about seven centuries long, as they date back to the 14th century when the Ottomans first stepped on the Balkan soil. These ties have their depth, although critically they are evaluated differently on opposing sides. For instance, the Ottoman conquest and rule over this region is interpreted as an occupation, by Serbian and Montenegrin historiography, which was evidenced by the number of fights and revolts against the Ottomans. Turkish historiography describes the same process as a period of progress and prosperity of the region.[94] In this sense Turkey strongly relies on the legacy of the Ottoman rule over the Balkans, that has greatly affected the region's various social, political, and cultural aspects.[95] For example, before the arrival of the Turks, the Balkans were the exclusive domain of Christianity, and since their arrival, and the spread of the Islamic religion, the Balkans have become a space of different religions, peoples, and different social systems.[96] Moreover, in most of the sources it is cited that the name Balkan is derived from a Turkish word, which means a chain of forested mountains, stretching from central Bulgaria to eastern Serbia.[97] Additionally, there is a huge Balkan diaspora living in Turkey, as the result of large migrations during the

[92] Mitrović Bošković Marija, Dušan Reljić and Alida Vračić. "Elsewhere in the Neighbourhood: Reaching Out to the Western Balkans." In *Turkey's Public Diplomacy,* ed. B. Senem Çevik and Philip Seib (pp.99-120), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Minister Davutoğlu on one occasion commented that "if there was no Ottoman state, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, Ottoman Grand Vezir who was taken from one Serbian family, would be a poor Serbian man who lived just to have a small farm." Cited in Erhan Türbedar, "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139-158., p. 146.
[95] It is estimated that were more Ottoman mosques and other cultural and architectural monument on the territories of the Balkans, than in any other part of the Empire. See Hakan Yavuz. *Nostalgia for the empire: the politics of Neo-Ottomanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020., p. 204-205.
[96] Birgül Demirtaş. "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan ties: Opportunities and limitations." In *Turkish foreign policy,* ed. Gözen Ercan P. (pp. 129-149), Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
[97] "Da li znate odakle potiče naziv Balkan?" National Geographic Serbia, May 31, 2005, Accessed September 4, 2021, https://nationalgeographic.rs/priroda/zemlja/a14257/da-li-znate-odakle-potice-naziv-balkan.html See also Maria Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

late 19th and early 20th century. According to the information by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is around 15 million Turkish citizens with Balkan origin.[98] And there are thousands of words of Turkish origin still actively used in languages of the Balkan countries. All these factors have given the space for the modern Turkish Republic to re-appear in the region, guided with greater ambitions.

After Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, the Western Balkan countries were one of the first countries that Turkey initiated good and friendly relations with. In particular, the first diplomatic relations were initiated between Albania and Turkey in 1923, and between Yugoslavia and Turkey in 1933, when the two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Arbitration and Reconciliation. This was followed by the signing of the *Balkan Entente* between Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, and Romania in 1934, whose main aim was to protect territorial integrity of the signatory states, and to perserve Balkans into a stable region.[99] In 1953, *Balkan Pact* was signed between Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia, as the agreement predisposed to stop the Soviet expansion in the Balkans.[100]

During the Cold War, relations between Turkey and Western Balkans were good-natured, and rather stable. At that time, for Turkey the Western Balkan region was 'distant' as Turkish politics were mainly focused on security issues.[101] After the end of Cold War, Turkey's influence in the region turned out to be more proactive and multidimensional. Turkey's foreign policy started shifting from a neutral foreign policy towards more active and engaging regional policy. Especially, when the civil war in Yugoslavia began in 1991, Turkey's initial views were that there should be a peaceful solution to the problems instead of disintegration. Turkey was in a kind of 'stalemate' regarding the foreign policy strategy towards Yugoslavia during this period. It both wanted to support the countries who were seeking independence, but it also did not want to be a country that supported disintegration of Yugoslavia. In 1992 Serbian President Milošević visited Ankara, when he met with Turkish President Süleyman Demirel (1993-2000), who expressed his concerns about the gravity of the situation in Yugoslavia.[102] From the beginning of the conflict, Ankara used its

[98] "Relations with the Balkan Region." Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accessed November 24, 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa.
[99] Didem Ekinci. "A Chronicle of Evolving Turkish-Serbian Relations A Century After the Balkan Wars." *Uluslararasi Suçlar ve Tarih* no. 14 (2013): 7-36.
[100] Alinda Vračić. "Turkey's role in the Western Balkans." SWP Research paper, Berlin 2016: 5-34.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ekinici writes that this was not a planned visit, as in 1991 Yugoslavian ambassador was withdrew from Ankara. Didem Ekinci. "The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates (1992-1995): A constructivist approach." *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 6, no. 22 (2009): 37-60.

diplomatic efforts, and was one of the main participants of the international community calling for the war to end.[103] Turkey was principally concerned about Bosnian Muslims and sent them humanitarian aid and arms. Due to the centuries-old kinship relations between Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey was seen as the protector of Bosnian Muslims.[104] Turkey welcomed the signing of the Dayton Accords and remained active in the region in the post-war period.

2.2.2. Economic Ties

Foreign trade and FDI are significant segments of Turkish foreign policy in general. With the geographical proximity, and close socio-cultural connections, the region of the Western Balkans has become distinguished by Turkey as a region of large potential for development of stronger economic ties.[105]

Since 2000, Turkey's foreign trade with the Wester Balkan countries has experienced a great revival. Turkey's investment activities have been growing since 2002, and a very similar trend can be traced in the trade volume. Additionally, flourishing of Turkish companies in the finance, manufacturing, construction, medical and insurance sectors in the Western Balkan markets has been noted. From $435 million in 2002, total trade volume reached $2.3 billion in 2014.[106] As it can be seen from the table below (Table 2), until 2011 the biggest trade volume was between Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. After 2011, Serbia emerged as one of the region's main trading partners with Turkey. Despite the total trade volume of Turkey with the Western Balkans not being as high as compared with other markets where Turkey is present, the trade surplus that Turkey achieves here makes it an attractive market to operate at. Turkey signed Free Trade Agreements with every country in the Western Balkans; with North Macedonia in 2000, with Bosnia and

[103] Ibid.
[104] In 1992, upon Turkey's initiative UN General Assembly assembled and adopted a Resolution condemning the forceful conquest of Bosnian territories, and after UN Security Council adopted another resolution that banned all the military flights over Bosnia, Turkey insisted on its immediate implementation. Turkey called for a multilateral intervention and joined the UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia by sending 1500 troops. The Turkish army was also part of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), and later Stabilisation Force (SFOR). See Didem Ekinci. "The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates (1992-1995): A constructivist approach." *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 6*, no. 22 (2009): 37-60.
[105] Mehmet Uğur Ekinci. "Turkey and the Western Balkans: Stable Relations and Deepening Cooperation." In *Turkey and Transatlantic Relations,* eds. Sasha Toperich and Aylin Ünver Noi (pp. 163-181), Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations SAIS, 2017.
[106] Ibid.

Herzegovina in 2003, with Albania in 2008, with Serbia in 2009, and with Montenegro in 2010.

With regard to Turkish investments in the Western Balkans, they mainly include strategic sectors such as telecommunication, energy, transportation, and finance. For Turkey, the Western Balkans market is a significant export destination and an important transit area for the export of goods to EU countries. Turkey's economic growth and liberalization process as the part of EU accession path, gave it an opportunity to intensify trade and to boost the investment sector in the Western Balkans. In connection with, Turkish government founded the Balkan Countries Working Group, under the Secretariat for Foreign Trade.[107] Turkish businessmen see the Western Balkans market quite attractive and suitable, given that countries from this region are 'en route' to become EU member states.[108] Turkish officials often call for Turkish businessmen to come and invest in the Western Balkans. It is particularly noticeable that during his official visits to the Western Balkan countries, President Erdoğan is accompanied by a big number of businessmen and potential investors.

Table 2. Total trade volume between Western Balkans and Turkey 2001-2014 (US dollars in million)

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2014
Albania	83.80	126.02	207.26	329.05	298.53	443.11	398.31	465.37
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	85.84	213.20	581.21	284.9	427.02	448.26	550.37
North Macedonia	49	111.58	159.91	248	291.51	417.22	386.17	445.43
Montenegro	-	-	-	34.25	36.26	51.38	57.06	55.8
Serbia[109]	88.32	131.3	261.62	453.62	339	588.32	749.9	820.6

Source: Ivana Božić Miljković. "Economic relations of the Western Balkans and Turkey in the Process of Eurointegration." *Balkanske Sinteze* 1 (2015): 67-87.

[107] Erhan Türbedar. "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139−158.
[108] Oya Dursun-Ozkanca. "Turkey and the European Union: Strategic partners or competitors in the Western Balkans?" *Journal of Regional Security* 11, no.1 (2016): 33-54.
[109] Data from 2001-2005 referes to the State Union of Serbia and Montenenegro.

When it comes to FDI outflow from Turkey to Western Balkans, Turkey is the leading foreign investor in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and North Macedonia.[110] From $35 million in 2005, Turkish FDI in Bosnia and Herzegovina increased to $210 million in 2016. In Albania, Turkish FDI in 2016 amounted for $73 million, making Turkey the country's largest investor.[111] Similarly, in North Macedonia Turkey was the second largest investor in 2016, with $26 million of FDI inflow.[112] When it comes to Serbia, Turkish FDI in the period 2005-2017, amounted for $70 million, which is a relatively low number.[113]

Turkish role in energy development also cannot be diminished. The Western Balkans is a major strategic interest zone for Turkish investors, particularly for the sector of energy investments such as electricity and natural gas, which represent great investment potential. Turkey, as a Balkan and at the same time Eurasian state, has a very important geopolitical role in the energy paradigm of the Western Balkan. At the Ankara Summit ın 2013, the Turkish Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources stressed the necessity to strengthen cooperation in energy field between Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.[114]

2.2.3. Role of a Mediator

Since the arrival of the JDP, Turkey has been extremely engaged in efforts to achieve greater political influence in the Western Balkan region, and to impose itself as a mediator in resolving disputes. The most concrete example of Turkey's contribution to good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation was the signing of the Istanbul Declaration in 2010 between Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The declaration was signed by Serbian President Boris Tadić, Bosnian Presidency Chairman Haris Silajdžić and Turkish President Abdullah Gül, who agreed that they would work on building peace, prosperity, and stability in the Balkans, and that the common goal of all three countries is EU integration.[115] It was stated that in the future, regional policy should be based on ensuring

[110] Mehmet Uğur Ekinci. "Turkey and the Western Balkans: Stable Relations and Deepening Cooperation." In *Turkey and Transatlantic Relations*, eds. Sasha Toperich and Aylin Ünver Noi (pp. 163-181), Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations SAIS, 2017.
[111] Ibid., p. 167-170.
[112] Ibid.
[113]Nuroğlu, Hüseyin H., and Elif Nuroğlu. "Turkey and Germany in the Balkans: Competing with Each Other?" *Insight Turkey* 21, no. 2 (2019): 211-236.
[114] Önsoy, Murat, and Şebnem Udum. "The role of Turkey in Western Balkan energy security." *Asia Europe Journal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 175–192.
[115] Karol Bieniek. "Thirty years of relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Serbia: Changing political and international dynamics." *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 19, no. 4 (2021): 175-189.

security, constant political dialogue and preserving the multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious characteristics of the region.[116] Turkey continued presenting itself as a mediator and guarantor of the peace in the Balkans, and at the initiative of Turkey, the so-called "Mechanism of trilateral consultations" between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Turkey has been created. The future meetings within Trilateral mechanisms were supposed to accelerate the process of European integration of the mentioned countries, preserve peace and stability in the region and enable progress in the field of democratization, tolerance and comprehensive political, economic, and cultural cooperation between Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Ankara.[117] Turkey also attaches importance to the regional cooperation through initiatives such as South-East European Countries Cooperation Process (SEECP), and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).[118] These mechanisms have the main task of developing regional cooperation in South-East Europe and promote integration of the region to the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Being amongst the founding members, Turkey significantly contributed to the budget of these initiatives, and has an effective role in the implementation of joint regional projects. [119]

Additionally, Turkey's path towards the EU integration is connected with Turkish engagement in the Western Balkans. Therefore, peace and stability among the Western Balkan countries are important for the continuous economic and political development of Turkey's relations with Europe.[120] In 2004, when the EU officially started the accession talks with Turkey, this was used as a model for the Western Balkan countries.[121] Turkey supports Western Balkan countries aspirations for the EU and NATO memberships. For example, the European Commission's 2011 Progress Report on Turkey praised Turkey's political engagement in the region and co-operation with the Western Balkans. It is especially mentioned that Turkey has intensified contacts with the countries from the region and that it

[116] Ibid.
[117] Muhidin Mulalić. "Prospects for Trilateral Relations between Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Insight Turkey* 21, no. 2 (2019): 129–48.
[118] SEECP was launched in 1996, with the aim of strengthening regional co-operation, security, and stability. Member states are Turkey, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia. RCC is the operational branch of SEECP. See "South East European Countries Cooperation Process (SEECP)", Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey, Accessed June 19, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-regional-cooperation-council-_rcc__.en.mfa.
[119] "Turkey's Relations with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey, Accessed June 19, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-regional-cooperation-council-_rcc__.en.mfa.
[120] Alessandri Emiliano. "The New Turkish Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-EU Relations." I*stituto Affari Internazionali*, no. 2 (2010).
[121] Edith Harxhi. "An overview of Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans: 1990-2016." *Insight Turkey* 19, no. 1 (2017): 33-42.

supports their European path. The Report particularly welcomed the triple summit of the heads of state of Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010.[122]

2.2.4. Neo-Ottomanism in the Western Balkans

It is generally argued in the literature that Turkey's increased involvement in the Western Balkans is mainly based on the image of historic heritage of the Ottoman Empire. It could be seen that the image of kinship and closeness based on common Ottoman legacy, was one of the arguments used by the JDP administration in the formulation of Western Balkan foreign policy. Ahmet Davutoğlu certainly leads the way, who in his public appearances often recalls the Ottoman past and points out that common past is a good example for the future relations between Turkey and Western Balkans. *"We should not forget that the fate of the Ottoman state was sealed in the Balkans. A Turkey unable to create zones of its influence in the Balkans would also be unable to influence international relations in general or the balance in the region."*[123]

The Neo-Ottoman doctrine is argued to be introduced during the era of the former Turkish President Turgut Özal (1987-1993), described as "an intellectual movement that advocated Turkish pursuit of active and diversified foreign policy in the region based on the Ottoman historical heritage."[124] A British journalist David Barchard, used this concept to describe the possible future foreign policy course of Turkey. He defined Neo-Ottomanism as a "historical consciousness of the imperial Ottoman past, that is a more potent force in Turkey than Islam."[125] Accordingly, Neo-Ottomanism designates the formation of "historical consciousness", created by cultural, social, and cognitive factors, that deals with the current issues and problems.[126] Neo-Ottoman discourse is rather "nostalgic, critical of the present and romantic about the period before the decline of the Ottoman Empire."[127]

Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo in October 2009, is generally given as the best example of a Neo-Ottoman pillar in the Western Balkans. In his speech Davutoğlu

[122] Read the Commission's Report at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/2011-progress-report-turkey_en, Accessed April 1, 2022.
[123] Ahmet Davutoğlu, cited in Darko Tanasković. "Turkey and the Balkans: Old Traditions, New Aspirations." *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2012): 51-62., p. 62.
[124] Hakan Yavuz. *Nostalgia for the empire: the politics of neo-Ottomanism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020., p. 946.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] To read more about Neo-Ottomanism, see also Hakan Yavuz. "Turkish identity and foreign policy flux: The rise of Neo-Ottomanism." *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 12 (1998): 19-41.

outlined the importance of the Balkan component in Turkish foreign policy, stating: "We want a new Balkans based on political values, economic independence, cooperation and cultural harmony" and, among other things, adding: "It is similar to the Ottoman Balkans. Like in the 16th century, when the Ottoman Balkans were rising, we will once again make the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre of world politics in the future. That is the goal of the Turkish foreign policy, and we will achieve it."[128] Academics use this speech of Davutoğlu to highlight the change in Turkish Balkan foreign policy and initiate the Neo-Ottoman premises that existed during the JDP administration.[129]

For instance, Darko Tanasković former Yugoslavian ambassador in Ankara (1995-1999), agrees that Neo-Ottomanism attracts the most attention as a foreign policy doctrine that the current Turkish government consistently implements in the Western Balkans.[130] He points out that modern Turkey sees its traditional sphere of interest and legitimate area of its political influence in the Western Balkans. Turkey's efforts to reopen and develop relations with countries and regions that were once under the Ottoman Empire; visible increased economic activity, the development of diplomatic and political relations all go in favour of reviving the strategy of Neo-Ottomanism.[131] As the best example of neo-Ottomanism in the Balkans, he cites independence of Bosnia and Kosovo. For Tanasković, neo-Ottomanism casts back and best reflects the expansionist ideas of Turkish Muslims, who have the aspiration to rule the Balkans.[132] As the main upholders of Neo-Ottomanism, he particularizes Turkish politicians who are conservative Islamist, with Davutoğlu as the main figure. For Tanasković, Davutoğlu's performance in Sarajevo was in fact a good thing, because now Turkish establishment cannot refute the thesis about Neo-Ottomanism in Western Balkans.

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[128] "The historic march of our holy nation...", Hurriyet, Accessed on November 20, 2021. https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/burak-bekdil/the-historic-march-of-our-holy-nation-52615.

[129] See Erhan Türbedar. "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139-158; Darko Tanasković. "Srbi pred izazovima neoosmanizma." *Politeia* 2 (2011): 19-31.

[130] Darko Tanasković. *Neosmanizam, povratak Turske na Bakan*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2010, p. 8.

[131] In his book "Neo-Ottomanism, Turkey's return to the Balkans", Tanasković precisely describes Turkey's new foreign policy strategy, calling it Neo-Ottomanism. According to him, Neo-Ottomanism is Turkey's effort to capitalize "historical depth" and to renew influence in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East pragmatically and by modern means, based on the fact that the Ottoman Empire ruled a large part of those areas until the First World War. See Darko Tanasković. *Neosmanizam, povratak Turske na Bakan*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2010, p. 8.

[132] Hakan Yavuz. *Nostalgia for the empire: the politics of neo-Ottomanism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Conclusion

Both Turkey and Russia have seen the Western Balkans as a part of their natural sphere of influence. Russian connections with the Western Balkans are deeply rooted and historically very important. Russia plays an important factor in this region thanks to the same dominant religion, and similar language with many Western Balkan countries. Its influence is greatly visible in the political, cultural, and economic sphere. Western Balkans are mainly conceived as a wider political sphere where Russia seeks to minimize and demean the values and achievements of other actors, in the first place NATO and EU.

Just like Russia's, Turkey's relationship with the Western Balkans is long and complex. After the end of the Cold War, Turkey returned to this region with a differently defined set of foreign policies. Turkey has invested greatly into acquiring stronger cultural, economic, and political influence in the Western Balkans. Investing into this region was expected to bring closer not only Turkey and the Western Balkans, but also Turkey and the EU, as the European integration is their common goal. With the regional interconnectedness, and practise of the zero problems with the neighbour policy, Turkey was actively conducing a multidimensional diplomacy in the Western Balkans. An important pillar of Turkey's new Balkan policy was to protect and strengthen the Turkish and Muslim presence in the region. Because the strong Turkish-Muslim presence in the region also meant an increase in Turkey's political and socio-cultural influence in the region.

3. COMPARISON OF RUSSIAN AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In this chapter we present the main argument of our thesis and compare Russian and Turkish foreign policies in the Western Balkans. As it has been defined at the beginning, our argument is that Russia and Turkey by conducting a pro-active foreign policy in the region, strive to be recognized as great powers in this region, in line with the historical, geographical, religious, and cultural ties with the region. To accomplish that goal, Russia and Turkey have been extensively using the mechanisms of soft power and energy politics to successfully increase their influence. In this part of our research, the instruments Russia and Turkey use in the implementation of their foreign policies are identified, reviewed, and compared. Firstly, a short overview of Russian and Turkish foreign policies is made, followed by a analysis and comparison of the main foreign policy instruments these two countries use. That being the case, we identity **soft power** (religious and cultural networks, and public diplomacy), and **energy politics** as the main instruments that Russia and Turkey use for the time period relevant for our research (2000-2014).

3.1. Russian Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans

Under Putin's leadership, Russian foreign policy was based on presenting Russia as a great power that possesses a significant diplomatic impact in the world. His new foreign policy vision was determined within the framework of three main documents, which aimed to carry out political, military, and economic issues together in a coherent system. These documents were the Foreign Policy Doctrine, the National Security Doctrine and Military Doctrine.[133] In June 2000, President Putin approved the new Concept of Russian Foreign Policy, which was considered to be one of the most fundamental documents shaping the new directions of Russian foreign policy.[134]

[133] The National Security Doctrine (adopted in 1997, 2000 and in 2009 being renamed into the Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation until the year 2020) is prepared by the Security Council of the Russian Federation and provides an overview of the country's security policy. The Military Doctrine (adopted in 2000, 2010, 2014) is prepared by the Ministry of Defence and deals with the country's military affairs. The Foreign Policy Doctrine (adopted in 1993, 2000, 2008, 2013, 2016) is prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is related to the political and diplomatic interests of the Russian Federation.

[134] The first attempt to conceptualize Russia's foreign policy was in 1993, when the state issued a document to coordinate its foreign policy. This document was replaced by the new Foreign Policy Concept in 2000, adopted after Vladimir Putin became president. The concepts were later updated in 2008, 2013, 2016.

In these Foreign Policy Concepts, the area of Western Balkans specifically is not mentioned, whereas it is referred to as the Balkans. The Balkans are mentioned in the Foreign Policy Doctrines in 2000 and 2013. The region was first mentioned in the 2000 Concept in the sense that Russia will "give an all-out assistance to the attainment of a just settlement of the situation in the Balkans, one based on the coordinated decisions of the world community."[135] The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept didn't include Balkans, whereas it is slightly referred in the part where it is outlined that Russia is interested in cooperating and maintaining good with the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

In the 2013 Russian Foreign Policy Doctrine, the Balkans was referred to as follows: "The Balkan region is of great strategic importance for Russia in terms of its importance as a transportation and infrastructure centre for the transfer of natural gas and oil to European countries."[136] Therefore, the economic and political situation of the region was an effective factor in shaping the energy policies of Russia. The Balkans were not mentioned in the last 2016 Foreign Policy Concept. This didn't necessarily imply that Russia was turning away from the Balkans, or that was being indifferent towards the region, as some analysts imply.[137] Russia was still present, as the part of its strategy to increase influence in the region.

As already stated, Russian interests in the Western Balkans range from economic, political, geo-strategic interests to trade, investment, energy projects and tourism. In the past 15 years, visits of high officials from Russia to the region have become frequent, parallel to the Russian increasing interests. This has additionally helped branch out Russian cultural, economic, and political ties, and directly contributed to promoting Russian diplomatic influence in the Western Balkans. Russia was becoming more visible as it started using a variety of soft power mechanisms. In contrast to the hard power instruments that Russia was prone to using (for example War in Georgia in 2008, annexation of Crimea in 2014), use of soft power instruments was best noticeable in the Western Balkans. Relatively late, Russia started using the idea of soft power in its foreign policy approach. For the first time, the Foreign Policy Concept in 2013 mentioned the importance of soft power as one of the instruments for improving Russia's image. It was pointed out that "Soft power, a

[135] "The Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation", June 28, 2000, Accessed October 2, 2021. https://nuke.fas.org/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm.
[136] "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation." Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Thailand, February 12, 2013, Accessed July 5, 2022, https://thailand.mid.ru/en/concept-of-the-foreign-policy-of-russia.
[137] See "Russia in the Balkans. The Balkans at the Epicentre of International Developments." Russian Council, Accessed April 14, 2022, https://russiancouncil.ru/en/balkans.

comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations."[138] From now on, Russia started relying on the use of diplomatic, intelligence, religious, cultural, and economic tools to influence political and economic decision-making processes in the key regions, including the Western Balkans.[139]

3.2. Turkish Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans

As stated in the previous chapters, with its multidimensional foreign policy strategy, Turkey's engagement has also been evident in the Western Balkans. Turkey's new foreign policy strategy towards the Western Balkans after 2000, was more ambitious, with an increased emphasis on the use of soft power and public diplomacy.[140] It is believed that the JDP government was successful in presenting Turkey as a model country for using public diplomacy in building relations with nations.[141] The JDP leaders' awareness of the importance of public diplomacy was one of the most important factors contributing to Turkey's soft power building, both at regional and global level. Therefore, the Turkish government has established the Office of Public Diplomacy, which operates within the Presidency of the Republic. A number of institutions linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been established, that have contributed to the implementation of activities aimed at developing the positive image of Turkish use of soft power.

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that "the Western Balkans is a priority for Turkey not only from the political, economic, and geographical perspectives, but also due to

[138] "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation." Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Thailand, February 12, 2013, Accessed July 5, 2022, https://thailand.mid.ru/en/concept-of-the-foreign-policy-of-russia.

[139] In the list of documents emphasizing the role of culture in state foreign policy, a special place is occupied by Presidential Decrees. For instance, in the Presidential Decree from 2012, on Measures for the Implementation of the Foreign Policy Course of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as other federal executive bodies, are expected to "expand the Russian cultural presence abroad, strengthen the position of the Russian language in the world and develop a network of Russian centres of science and culture." See Greg Simons." Russian public diplomacy in the 21st century: Structure, means and message." *Public Relations Review* 40, no. 3 (2014): 440-449.

[140] Ankara saw the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the formation of new states with Muslim minorities as an opportunity for regional influence. Turkey has recognized all the states that emerged after Yugoslavia, emphasizing a special interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia as the fundamental points of Turkey's policy towards the Balkans. See Birgül Demirtaş. "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan Ties: Opportunities and Limitations." in *Turkish Foreign Policy: International Relations, Legality and Global Reach* ed. Pınar Gözen Ercan (pp.121-159), London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

[141] Muharrem Ekşi and Mehmet Seyfettin Erol. "The rise and fall of Turkish soft power and public diplomacy." *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 11, no. 23 (2018): 15-45.

its historical, cultural, and human ties with the region, and being the geographical connection of Turkey with the rest of Europe, the Balkans bear great importance with the special place it had in the historical process that shaped the Turkish nation."[142] In that respect, Turkey has defined four main pillars of Turkish foreign policy towards the Balkans: security for all; high level political dialogue; economic interdependence, cooperation, all-inclusiveness; preservation of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-social fabric of the region.[143]

The extent of Turkish foreign policy can be best seen through engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Serbia. That activism consisted of increased number of high-level visits by Turkish officials, and Turkish initiative to start trilateral mechanisms between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia.[144] What is especially noticeable in this foreign policy approach is the opening of relations with Serbia, after the democratic changes in 2000. It is said that Serbia and Turkey have reached the peak of their relations during the JDP government, which will be detailed in chapter seven.[145]

3.3. Soft power of Russia and Turkey in the Western Balkans

Turkey and Russia built their influence in the region, thanks to historical, socio-cultural, and economic interconnections, that helped them increase political influence. What was obvious was that Russian and Turkish approach was not based on single policy instrument but incorporate variation of other instruments. Here, we examine soft power as one of the pillars of Russian and Turkish involvement in the Western Balkans. As the main instruments of soft power, religious networks, cultural networks, and public diplomacy are analysed.

Soft power as a concept was for the first time constituted in the work of Joseph Nye, "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power". For Nye, soft power is "the

[142] "Relations with the Balkan Region." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey, Accessed on January 2, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa.
[143] "Relations with the Balkan Region." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey, Accessed on January 2, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa.
[144] Turkish President Erdoğan, alongside with foreign ministers on various occasions visited Bosnia, while the members of the Bosnian presidency regularly attend meetings with their Turkish counterparts and pay official visits to Turkey. It is interesting to mention that in 2018, Erdoğan held a pre-electoral rally in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Sarajevo, after gatherings in Germany and Austria were banned by the local authorities. Analysts have described this as the most western that Erdoğan could have come in an attempt to hold a rally with Turkish citizens from Europe.
[145] Ešref Kenan Rašidagić, and Zora Hesova. "Development of Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Western Balkans with Focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Croatian International Relations Review* 26, no. 86 (2020): 96-129.

power to get what you want thanks to attraction, not coercion or payment."[146] A country's ability to use soft power rests on three sources: culture, political values (at home and abroad) and foreign policy.[147] The primary goals that a state tries to achieve through soft power are attraction or persuasion. The most effective instruments of soft power include religious networks, information and communication systems, educational activities, activities non-governmental organizations, and public diplomacy.

To maintain influence in the Western Balkans, Russia has been using the power that Russian orthodox church has in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republic of Srpska) and North Macedonia.[148] In Serbia 85% of the population are Orthodox Christians; 75% in Montenegro; 30% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 60% in North Macedonia.[149] Major part of the population describes themselves as religious, stating that religion is a key part of their national identity. Since Putin's arrival to power closer links between Orthodox Church and State have been restored. Using the narrative of brotherhood, protection of traditional family values of Orthodox church, and protection of the Christian Orthodox population, Russia was strengthening ties and enhancing influence within Orthodox Christian communities in the region.[150] For instance, in 2014 Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Kirill, visited Serbia right after the official visit of President Putin. On this occasion he stated that he "feels like home", and he was awarded an honorary doctoral degree at the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade.[151] In conversation with Patriarch Kirill, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić stated that "Serbian Orthodox Church has great support in the Russian Orthodox Church, and Serbia in Russian Federation."[152] Additionally, Russia has been investing in construction and restoration of churches, monasteries, and temples. Russia has invested five million dollars in the construction of the Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade,

[146] Cited in Dejan Tadić. "The concept of soft power in Russian foreign policy in the twenty-first century." *Medjunarodni problemi* 68, no. 1 (2016): 112-132., p. 113.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Serbian Orthodox Church is an autocephalous and independent church, and it is the sixth in the diptych of the Orthodox Churches.
[149] Mario Cruz. "Russia in the Western Balkans: Interests and Tools of Influence.", in *The Russian Federation in Global Knowledge Warfare,* eds. Holger Mölder, Vladimir Sazonov, Archil Chochia, Tanel Kerikmäe (pp.315-333), Cham: Springer, 2021.
[150] During the time of the communist state in Russia, State and Church affairs were separated, due to the ideologies of communism. Church was even deprived of its right to tax exemtion it used to have. See Mario Cruz. "Russia in the Western Balkans: Interests and Tools of Influence.", in *The Russian Federation in Global Knowledge Warfare,* eds. Holger Mölder, Vladimir Sazonov, Archil Chochia, Tanel Kerikmäe (pp.315-333), Cham: Springer, 2021.
[151] "Patrijarh Kiril u Beogradu." RTS November 14 2014, Accessed July 1, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/1750647/patrijarh-kiril-u-beogradu.html.
[152] "Patrijarh Kiril u Beogradu." RTS November 14 2014, Accessed July 1, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/1750647/patrijarh-kiril-u-beogradu.html.

Serbia, one of the three biggest temples in the Orthodox world. The team of Russian artists and craftsmen who were participating in the decoration, was led by Russian academician Nikolai Mukhin, the main creator of the mosaics in the temple.[153]

Since its establishment in 1995, under the supervision of the Russian Foreign Ministry, *International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations* has been connecting and uniting Christians at international level. The main mission of this foundation is "enlargement and extension of the ties between Slavic nations and nations of the Eastern Christian area in the spheres of spiritual life, culture, science and economy."[154] In 2013, Milorad Dodik, president of Republic of Srpska was the recipient of the annual award of this foundation, for "outstanding activity on strengthening unity among Christian Orthodox nations."[155]

As for Turkey, Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs or Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı is the main religious organization present in the Western Balkans. It carries out activities related to worship of main principles of Islam, provides numerous religious services to Muslim communities in the Western Balkans, and supports the constructions and restoration of mosques.[156] First, under the subsidiary of Turkish Prime Ministry, now Turkish Presidency Diyanet is present in every Western Balkan country, it has an attaché office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and coordination office in Serbia.[157] Diyanet has been organizing Eurasian Islam Council since 1995, for the heads of Islamic administrators in the Caucasus and the Balkans.[158] Additionally, since 2007, Turkish Diyanet has been the host of annual meetings of Balkan religious leaders.[159] Diyanet also provides scholarships for religious

[153] In 2019, President Putin attended the official oppening of the Temple, where more over 100.000 citizens were gathered. See Mario Cruz. "Russia in the Western Balkans: Interests and Tools of Influence.", in *The Russian Federation in Global Knowledge Warfare,* eds. Holger Mölder, Vladimir Sazonov, Archil Chochia, Tanel Kerikmäe (pp.315-333), Cham: Springer, 2021.
[154] Clark, David, and Andrew Foxall, "Russia's Role in the Balkans – Cause for Concern?" *The Henry Jackson Society*, (June 2014): 3-19, p. 13.
[155] Ibid.
[156]Kerem Öktem. "Global Diyanet and multiple networks: Turkey's new presence in the Balkans." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27-58.
[157] Jahja Muhasilović. "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans." *Rising Powers Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (2018): 63-85.
[158] The only meeting of the Council held outside of Turkey was in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2000. Kerem Öktem. "Global Diyanet and multiple networks: Turkey's new presence in the Balkans." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27-58.
[159] Kerem Öktem. "Global Diyanet and multiple networks: Turkey's new presence in the Balkans." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27-58.

education of students coming from Western Balkan countries, whereas around 1000 scholarships on annual level are awarded.

As for the promotion of cultural activities, the leading Russian agency is Rossotrudnichestvo, a federal agency under the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, established in 2008. Rossotrudnichestvo ensures the implementation of projects to create and maintain a positive image of Russia abroad. In the Western Balkans, Rossotrudnichestvo is present in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia. By the cultural activities it carries out, it strives to promote Russian culture and Russian language, and promote educational services of Russia.

Foundation Ruskyy Mir (Russian World) established by the presidential decree in 2007, has the main goal of promoting Russian culture, national heritage, teaching and preserving Russian language. It operates in Serbia (two centres), Montenegro, and Republic of Srpska. Similarly, Alexander Gorchakov Foundation, also founded by the decree of the President in 2010, has the mission of promoting Russian diplomacy in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry of Russia.[160]

Regarding the presence of Turkish cultural networks, biggest contribution is seen through the activities of Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), and Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) that have their offices in almost every Balkan country.

TIKA was established in 1992, first under subordinacy of the Turkish Presidency, to provide help and support to relevant regions and countries.[161] TIKA can be characterized as the main tool of Turkish soft power policy not only in the Western Balkans, but in the whole Balkans. Between 2004-2011 TIKA opened offices in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia.[162] Over the years TIKA has been building schools, hospitals and investing in renovation and restoration of Ottomans monuments and mosques. Through the realized projects, TIKA has been contributing to economic-cultural cooperation and consolidation of Turkey in the region. In 2008, Western Balkan countries were amongst

[160] Alyona Ageeva, and Goran Stošević. "The Kremlin and its "soft power" strategy in the Balkans." Il grido del popolo. Analysis. December 23, 2019, Accessed July 1, 2022, https://ilgridodelpopolo.com/the-kremlin-and-its-soft-power-strategy-in-the-balkans/.

[161] TIKA was first established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later it was subordinated to the Office of the Prime Minister, and now it is under subordinacy of the Turkish Presidency.

[162] Ahmet Erdi, Öztürk and Samim Akgönül. "Turkey: forced marriage or marriage of convenience with the Western Balkans?." In *The Western Balkans in the World: Linkages and relations with Non-Western Countries*, eds. Florian Bieber and Nikolaos Tzifakis (pp. 225-240), London: Routledge, 2019.

top ten countries recipients of TIKA direct investment, while after 2010 the countries have been receiving more than 2% of the organization's total budget.[163] Namely, in 2011, out of 1437 projects that TIKA has realized, 425 of them were carried out in the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. And in 2014 TIKA almost 18% of TIKA's investments were directed to the countries of Western Balkan, of which the most in Bosnia and Herzegovina 7%.[164] Some of the biggest projects carried out by TIKA in the Western Balkans are construction of "Emperors Mosque" in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, renovation of "Mehmet Paša Sokolović Bridge" in Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina, construction of madrasa "Haxhi Sheh Shamia" in Shkodra, Albania, repair and supply of the hospital "Mother Teresa" in Skopje, North Macedonia, restoration of "Ottoman Clock Tower" in Podgorica, Montenegro, restoration of "Ram Fortress" in Belgrade, Serbia.

Yunus Emre Institute is another mean of active Turkish foreign policy in the region. The Institute has twelve centres operating in the Western Balkans: three centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina, three centres in Kosovo, two centres in Albania, and one centre each in Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia. Through the activities of the Institute, citizens of the Western Balkan countries have the opportunity to learn more about Turkish language, Turkish culture, Turkish heritage and about Turkey in general. At the opening of the Institute's branch in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that opening of a branch here was "a well-thought tactical move".[165] This certainly indicated that the centre was envisioned as a tool of Turkish soft power for achieving wider foreign policy goals. YEE besides organizing courses of Turkish lessons, organizes summer school all in cities all around Turkey, competitions of archery, art, and folklore games all in the goal of highlighting common Turkish and Balkan culture.

Russia is actively present in the sector of media and communication in the Western Balkans. Radio program Voice of Russia and Russian Information Agency (RIA) operated in Serbia until 2015. They stopped with their activities in favour of the opening of Sputnik, Russian state-owned media. Sputnik is one of the most influential foreign media agencies in

[163] Ibid., p. 234.
[164] "TIKA Annual Report 2014" TIKA, Accessed July 3, 2022, https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2016/INGILIZCE%20SITE%20ESERLER/FAAL%C4%B0YET%20RAPORLARI/PDFLER/FR2014_ENG.pdf.
[165] Coby Vail. "Turkey's Public Diplomacy and the Yunus Emre Institutes." Turkish Heritage Organization, December, 2018, Accessed July 1, 2022, https://medium.com/meddah-a-u-s-turkey-storytelling-project/turkeys-public-diplomacy-and-the-yunus-emre-institutes-1a5192238048.

Western Balkans. Besides in Serbia, it operates in Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where another Russian media outlet Russia Today (RT) is present. The main target of these media is Serbian population in the region. The narratives and activities of Russian medias in the Western Balkans are often described as promoting conspiracy theories, propaganda and spreading disinformation. They also include stories that idolize Vladimir Putin and diminish the West in the first place USA.

As for Turkey, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and Anadolu Agency are the main mass media tools in the region. Anadolu Agency opened its headquarters in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2012, and has branches operating in Serbia and Kosovo. Besides in Turkish, news is broadcasted in Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian languages, and in a short time Anadolu Agency became one of the important news agencies in the social realm in the Western Balkans. Similarly, TRT is used as a tool of public diplomacy to increase Turkish visibility. TRT's digital platforms TRT Avaz, TRT Balkan and Turkey's voice were established to cover and report about the current happening in the Balkan region. [166]

Under the financial supervision of Turkey, in 2004 International University of Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina was opened. Just wo years later in 2006, another university was opened in North Macedonia, Skopje, the International Balkan University. Additionally, thousands of Balkan students have been receiving scholarships via Presidency of Turks Abroad and Relative Communities (YTB) to study in Turkey. YTB was founded in 2010, under the directive of the Turkish Prime Ministry, later Presidential Office after the abolishment of the Prime Minister office in Turkish political system in 2017. Ever since, it has been one of the main instruments for the so-called 'student exchange diplomacy'.[167] In 2013, the biggest number of students from Western Balkans who study in Turkey were from Kosovo (735), North Macedonia (535), Bosnia and Herzegovina (427), and Albania (507).[168] The biggest number of students who study in Russia come from Serbia, approximately 400.[169]

[166] Muhharem Ekşi. "Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power Policy Towards the Balkans." *Karadeniz Araştırmaları* 14, no.55 (2017): 189-208.
[167] Jahja Muhasilović. *Turkey's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak (2002-2017).* Istanbul: Union of Turskih World Municipalities, 2020.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Aleksandar Djokić. "The Perspectives of Russia's Soft Power in the Western Balkans Region." *Rudn journal of political science* 22, no. 2 (2020): 231-244.

Turkish TV series are another phenomenon that has taken over the Balkans since 2010. The popularity of Turkish TV series is the result of the cultural and linguistic similarities between Turkey and the Western Balkan region, and the fact that the societies in these countries identify with the traditional and patriarchal Turkish values showed in these series.[170] In general, the comedy series that best personifize Turkish culture, Turkish tradition and Turkish every day life, are mostly aired. It has been noted, also that the broadcast of these series in the last years has improved general opinion and attitudes toward Turkey.

Using the rhetoric of maintaining the 'brotherhood', Moscow intensified its foreign policy actions with continuous visits of Russian high officials to the Western Balkans, but also visits of statesmen to Russian military parades and celebrations. Here, Serbian politicians and high-ranking officials stand out, as well as officials from the Republic of Srpska. For instance, during the military parade on the occasion of the 70 years since the liberation of Belgrade in the Second World War, Russian President Putin was welcomed with the highest honours in Serbia in 2014.[171] In 2018, Serbian President Vučić attended the military parade in Moscow, at the invitation of the Russian President. Another significant political instrument of Russian politics in the Western Balkans is the personality of Vladimir Putin. The 'cult personality' of President Putin is most visible in Serbia. The cultivation of Russophilia or Putinophilia, has experienced its culmination in the last ten years since Aleksandar Vučić has been in power. Since 2012, pro-Russian propaganda in the media has produced a cult of the personality of Vladimir Putin, and it may sound unbelievable, but cult of Putin as a saviour of Serbian people is greater of the cult of Aleksandar Vučuć himself.[172] It is explained that a big part of Serbian population has been under the influence of years of political propaganda where, Putin and brother Russia have been presented as a loyal and respectable ally.

[170] Ferhan Gündüz. "Sociological Foundations of Success of Turkish Tv Soap Operas in the Balkans." *Propósitos y Representaciones* 8, no. 2 (2020): 1-17.

[171] According to some sources, the military parade scheduled for October 20th, the day when Belgrade was liberated from the German occupiers in WWII (the liberation in which the Soviet Army took part), was held 4 days earlier on October 16th, because President Putin, the guest of honour, could not attend later.

[172] Dinko Gruhonjić. "Serbia's media caught between Putinophilia and the new world reality." Respublica August 1, 2022, Accessed August 16, 2022, https://respublica.edu.mk/blog-en/stories-from-the-region/serbias-media-caught-between-putinophilia-and-the-new-world-reality/?lang=en.

Similarly, President Erdoğan's personal diplomacy has gained a significant role in Turkish policies towards the region.[173] It is emphasized that good private relations that President Erdoğan has with the Bosnian establishment greatly contribute to the good diplomatic relations between the two countries. Recently, personal relations between the presidents of Serbia and Turkey have also been put to the fore. It is important for Turkey to prove that it can have good relations with the Serbs, in order to strengthen its diplomatic credibility.

3.4. Energy Politics of Russia and Turkey in the Western Balkans

When talking about politics of Russia and Turkey in the Western Balkans, the emerging importance of energy geopolitics of the region is not neglectable. Scholars agree that for the Western Balkan countries, it is of the utmost importance to preserve the stability of the region. Nowadays, of particular importance in this regard is energy stability, as the Western Balkans are gaining more geopolitical importance for gas deliveries from Russia, but also as the door for European gas and oil supply from the Middle East, the Caspian Basin, Central Asia, and North Africa.[174]

In Western Balkans, Serbia and Croatia are singled out as the two most important gas consumers in the region, while the consumption markets of the rest of the countries are relatively small.[175] Western Balkan countries can largely be characterized as energy-dependent countries. These are countries that meet their needs by imports, with the energy security largely based on coal, and an extremely low percentage of renewable energy use. In the process of the global energy transformation, transport routes and energy partners, the Western Balkan region is set in a triangle between major energy actors, in the first place EU and Russia, and Turkey as an emerging energy hub. [176] This is confirmed by the fact, that currently three energy corridors are passing through this region: *Central/South-Eastern*

[173] Murat Ülgül. "Erdoğan's Personal Diplomacy and Turkish Foreign Policy." *Insight Turkey* 21, no. 4 (2019): 161–182.
[174] Dobrica Vesić. "Pozicioniranje Srbije u sistemu energetske bezbednosti." *Međunarodna politika* (2015): 37-47.
[175] Murat Önsoy, and Şebnem Udum. "The role of Turkey in Western Balkan energy security." *Asia Europe Journal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 175–192.
[176] Ibid.

Electricity Connection, the North-South Gas Interconnections, and *the Southern Gas Corridor.* [177]

The current gas pipelines operating in the Western Balkans are: Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline (TANAP), Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline (TAP), Ionian-Adriatic gas pipeline (IAP), and Turk Stream gas pipeline. With Trans-Adriatic pipeline natural gas from Azerbaijan is transported to South Europe. The pipeline goes from Greek-Turkish border on north-east, through northern Greece and south Albania, all the way down the Adriatic Sea to southern Italy.[178] On the Greek-Turkish border, TAP connects to TANAP.

The other important gas pipeline is the Turk Stream, which replaced the South Stream project, whose construction was abandoned at the end of 2014 by Russia, because it was unable to meet the requirements of the EU. Initially, the Turk Stream was agreed in December 2014 between Turkey and Russia. Due to the bilateral crisis between the two countries, the project was delayed for a while to revive in July 2016, and the construction began in 2017. Turk Stream is very important for the Western Balkans because it will transfer Russian gas from the direction of Turkey to the southern European and Central European markets. The Pipeline is expected to deliver 31.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year. It consists of two lines, whereas one transports gas directly from Russia to Turkey, and the other one transport gas from Russia to Europe via Turkey. Via Turk Stream Russian gas will transported through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, and Austria.[179] Turk Stream was officially launched in 2020, at the opening ceremony in Istanbul, where Turkish and Russian presidents were joined by the presidents of Serbia and Bulgaria. The opening of the pipeline section that goes through Serbia was officially inaugurated on January 1st, 2021, when Serbia

[177] The Southern Gas Corridor comprised Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP), the Nabucco Pipeline and Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy Pipeline (ITGI). The ITGI pipeline, and Nabucco Pipeline that were supposed to transport gas from Azerbaijan to the European market were terminated, and the Trans-Adriatic Gas Pipeline (TAP) came up as the best alternative. The ITGI pipeline was intended to transport natural gas from Azerbaijan via Greece and Italy to Europe, but the project was halted. Nabucco Pipeline which was designed to meet the rising demands of the European and Balkan markets, was also facing problems. Nabucco was supposed to transport gas from the Middle East, namely from Azerbaijan through Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania to the rest of the European market but the project eventually halted in 2012/2013, when the main supplier Azerbaijan retreated from the project, and other partners also stood down. See Sead Turčalo. "Energy geopolitics in the Balkans: geopolitics and European integration of the Western Balkans." *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* (2020): 1-12.; Murat Önsoy, and Şebnem Udum. "The role of Turkey in Western Balkan energy security." *Asia Europe Journal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 175–192.

[178] Murat Önsoy, and Şebnem Udum. "The role of Turkey in Western Balkan energy security." *Asia Europe Journal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 175–192.

[179] Sead Turčalo. "Energy geopolitics in the Balkans: geopolitics and European integration of the Western Balkans." Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2020): 1-12.

received the first shipments of the gas. Serbian part of the pipeline is long around 400km and will have the capacity of delivering 15.75 billion cubic meters of gas per year.[180]

Russia's energy wealth is based on its abundant energy resources and its vast system of pipeline networks that has created a system where third countries have become dependent on Russia for their energy supplies.[181] This energy dependence creates broader economic and political dependencies and translates into a direct source of power for Russia.[182] For instance in 2015, import dependence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia on Russian gas was 100%, while Serbian was 80%.[183]

After 2005 under the leadership of Putin, Russia began to stand out as "energy super state" whose power is based on strategically important sources of natural gas and oil, but also on the creation of a network for the export of these raw materials during the period of rising energy prices.[184] The wealth gained from energy has led to the formation of political stability and the assertive position of Russia in the international arena, and for this this reason, energy became one of the phenomena that further shaped Russian foreign policy.[185] In 2009 Prime Minister Putin announced that "Russia enjoys great energy and mineral resources that serve as a foundation for economic development and as an instrument for conducting domestic and foreign policy."[186] Additionally, energy politics is mentioned in the Foreign Policy Doctrines 2008 and 2013.

[180] "Serbia receives first gas from TurkStream pipeline." Anadolu Agency, December 31, 2020, Accessed August 15, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/serbia-receives-first-gas-from-turkstream-pipeline/2094199#.

[181] "Energy as a tool of foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular Russia." European Parliament, Belgium 2018, Accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603868/EXPO_STU(2018)603868_EN.pdf.

[182] "Energy as a tool of foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular Russia." European Parliament, Belgium 2018, Accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603868/EXPO_STU(2018)603868_EN.pdf.

[183] Dimitar Bechev. "Russia Playing a weak hand well." In The Western Balkans in the World, eds. Florian Bieber and Nikolaos Tzifakis, (pp.187-204). London: Routlege, 2019., p. 198.

[184] Mariya Omelicheva. "Russian foreign policy: A quest for great power status in a multipolar world." In *Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective: Domestic and International Influence on State Behavior* (pp.94-117), London: SAGE, 2013.

[185] For most of Putin's term, Russia enjoyed annual GDP growth rates around 7%, and by the end of his term, Russia had accumulated a $130 billion stabilisation fund from energy revenues and had $430 billion in currency reserves. See Angela E. Stent. "Restoration and revolution in Putin's foreign policy." *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 6 (2008): 1089-1106, p. 1094.

[186] Roman Kupchinsky. "Energy and Russia's National Security Strategy." Atlantic Council, May 19, 2009, Accessed July 3, 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/energy-and-russias-national-security-strategy/.

In the Western Balkan markets, besides the projects of oil and gas pipelines passing through the region, Russia has been increasing its visibility with other similar energy projects and investments. *Gazprom*, one of Russian biggest energy corporations entered the Balkan market in 2008.[187] By acquiring more than 51% of *Serbian Petroleum Industries (NIS)*, Russian company *Gazprom Neft* became the main, one can say stake holder of energy politics in Serbia. It was speculated that the purchase of NIS in Serbia at a much lower price than expected, was actually the result of Russia's support for Serbian policy regarding the status of Kosovo.[188] Activities of *Gazprom* are generally perceived as political and diplomatic support to the Russian state when required: "As a majority state-owned company, it is logical that the state has same interests as we do."[189] *Lukoil*, largest oil company in Russia, also became owner of smaller fuel retailers, gas stations, and smaller refineries throughout Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2005. These acquisitions enabled Russia to be economically present, and through economic presence it could easily expand its political influence.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, since 2007 Russia has been gaining influence mainly through energy investments. As a subsidiary of *Zarubezhneft* Russian state oil company, *Neftegazinkor* bought the *Brod Oil Refinery*, and purchased 76% of shares in *Modriča Oil Plant.*[190] The main motive for these purchases was the easier access to the European market, and market conformity, it was explained from the company.[191] This has had a positive effect on Bosnian economy, and very soon, Russia achieved a complete monopoly in the energy sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[192] Since 2011, *Njeftegazinkor* together with NIS, has a concession for oil exploration in Republic of Srpska. This also affected the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the Republic of Srpska. Russian activities are closely

[187] Around 70% of Russia's gas reserve are owned by Gazprom, that is one third of the world reserves.
[188] Stronski, Paul, and Annie Himes. "Russia's Game in the Balkans." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2019: 1-20.
[189] Sanja Tepavčević. "The motives of Russian state-owned companies for outward foreign direct investment and its impact on state-company cooperation: observations concerning the energy sector." *Transnational Corporations* 23. no. 1 (2015): 29-58., p. 43.
[190] Mehrzod Sharifzoda. "Russian Foreign Policy Towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-2019." Higher School of Economics, Research Paper WP BRB 38, November 2020, Accessed July 3, 2022, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3732085.
[191] Sanja Tepavčević. "The motives of Russian state-owned companies for outward foreign direct investment and its impact on state-company cooperation: observations concerning the energy sector." *Transnational Corporations* 23. no. 1 (2015): 29-58.
[192] Ibid.

tied to Republic of Srpska, and its President Milorad Dodik.[193] In recent years, Republic of Srpska has been recognized as a hub of Russian influence in the Western Balkans.

Another example is Montenegro, where Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, owner of *Rusal* bought 58% of shares of Montenegrin *Aluminium Plant Podgorica* (KAP) in 2005. At the time of sale KAP accounted for 51% of Montenegro's exports and 15% of the country's GDP.[194] The "deal was sealed", with a follow up visit from Boris Gryzlov, then-Duma speaker and then-Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu.[195] It was reported that Deripaska bought KAP "because Putin encouraged him to do so, as he wanted an era of influence in the Mediterranean."[196]

Table 3. Russian Oil Companies in the Western Balkans

Country	Russian Oil Companies	Russian-State Owned Companies
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Neftegazinkor (Zarubezhneft) NIS/Gazprom Neft	Brod (Oil Refinery) Modriča (Oil Refinery), Banjaluka Petrol, Gazprom Petrol
North Macedonia	LUKoil	LUKoil Macedonia (filling stations)
Montenegro	LUKoil	Aluminium Plant Podgorica (KAP) Lukoil Montenegro(filling stations)
Serbia	Gazprom Neft LUKoil	Naftna Industrija Srbije (NIS) - refineries at Pančevo and Novi Sad, LUKoil Serbia (filling stations)

Source: Dimitar Bechev. "Russia Playing a weak hand well." In *The Western Balkans in the World,* eds. Florian Bieber and Nikolaos Tzifakis, (pp.187-204). London: Routlege, 2019., p.196.

[193] Milorad Dodik is the incumbent Serbian member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before that he was the President of the Republic of Srpska (2010-2018), and Prime Minister of the Republic of Srpska (2006-2010).
[194] Dimitar Bechev. "The 2016 Coup Attempt in Montenegro: Is Russia's Balkans Footprint Expanding?" Russia Foreign Policy Papers (2018): 3-13.
[195] Tena Prelec. "Russian IFF and political influence in South-Eastern Europe: How financial flows and politics intersect in Montenegro and Serbia." Briefing note. University of Birmingham/FCDO (2022), p. 4.
[196] Cited in Tena Prelec. "Russian IFF and political influence in South-Eastern Europe: How financial flows and politics intersect in Montenegro and Serbia." Briefing note. University of Birmingham/FCDO (2022), p. 4.

Turkey's new foreign policy activism in the Western Balkans has paved the way for a more active role in the Balkans energy market.[197] The fact that the geography of the Balkan peninsula makes it an energy importer and Turkey's location between natural gas and oil-rich regions and the Balkans, paves the way for Turkey and the Balkans to establish close relations in the field of energy. In order to encourage energy ties with the region, Turkey has established the "energy-teams", under the direction of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resource.[198] These teams consist of public and non-government representatives from the energy sector, whose main task is to pay visits to the region looking for potential energy investment areas. In 2013, Turkish and Serbian Ministries consented on cooperating in the energy sector, and a year before that one of the energy teams was in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where talks on the future potential investment were held.[199] Still, Turkey's energy politics in the Western Balkans cannot be compared with Russia's. Russia has re-established itself a leading energy power, and the vital role of energy resources has found a direct response in Russian foreign policy and energy policy.

Conclusion

Russian and Turkish presence in the Western Balkans can mainly be seen through the aspects of Russian soft power and energy politics. Through the narrative of brotherhood of Orthodox nations, and by developing a web of religious and cultural networks, Russia has intensified its foreign policy activities and managed to stay present in the political sphere of Western Balkans. Russia is exploiting all of the options it has, and energy policy certainly belongs to the main set of tools of Russian foreign policy in the Western Balkans. Incorporating Western Balkans into its vast system of pipeline networks, and providing affordable oil and natural gas prices, Russia has created a system where third countries would have become dependent on its their energy supplies.[200] This energy dependence creates broader economic and political dependencies and translates into a direct source of power for Russia.[201] These types of "win-win approaches" turned out to be very important in the

[197] Murat Önsoy, and Şebnem Udum. "The role of Turkey in Western Balkan energy security." *Asia Europe Journal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 175–192.
[198] Ibid., p. 188.
[199] Ibid., p. 188.
[200] "Energy as a tool of foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular Russia." European Parliament, Belgium 2018, Accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603868/EXPO_STU(2018)603868_EN.pdf.
[201] "Energy as a tool of foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular Russia" European Parliament, Belgium 2018, Accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603868/EXPO_STU(2018)603868_EN.pdf.

Kremlin's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, primarily due to the fact that this area is considered a key area in maintaining Russian supremacy.[202] As it can be seen, Russia has a big advantage in exerting its influence through the means of energy politics. But when it comes to the apparatus of soft power, Turkish use of soft power instruments are better-connected and better developed than Russian. The reason is, as we explained, that Russia recently started incorporating the soft power instruments in its foreign policy strategy, compared to Turkey which has been using it very successfully ever since JDP took power in 2002. In line with the shift of Turkish foreign policy after 2002, TIKA and Yunus Emre acquired the central role in implementation of Turkish soft power foreign policy. It can be concluded that Turkey has the advantage in the use of soft power instruments, compared to Russia that dominates the field of energy politics in the Western Balkans.

After we have presented our main argument, and analysed Russian and Turkish foreign policy activities in the Western Balkans through comparative analysis, in the following chapters Russian and Turkish politics in Serbia will be analysed and compared in the similar manner. Based on the analysis of similar foreign policy instruments, it will be shown what are the main aims and outcomes of Russian and Turkish active foreign policy in Serbia. As it will be seen, Serbia is the country where the influence of foreign policy instruments Russia and Turkey have been using in the Western Balkans, has been the most evident.

[202] Vladimir Vučković. "Western Balkans still matters: Understanding Russian involvement in the region?" Balkans Crossroads, April 2021, Accessed July 10, 2022, https://www.balkancrossroads.com/russian-involvement-in-the-western-balkans.

4. THE CASE OF SERBIA

In this chapter the case of Serbia is presented, a country that in our opinion, the best represents the collision of Russian and Turkish ambitions and interests in the Western Balkans. The Republic of Serbia is a central and south-eastern European country, that borders with Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. With the population of 7.186.862 (without Kosovo) and surface of 88.499 km2, Serbia is the largest country in the Western Balkans. Serbian territory, geographically and especially geo-strategically, represents the natural and shortest connection between Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean.[203] All of important roads from Northern Europe, Western Europe, and Central Europe to South-East Europe and Asia pass through the territory of Serbia, whereas the Corridor 10 stands out as the most important road.[204] Through the geo-space of Serbia and the Balkan Peninsula, a continental connection is being established between Western and Central Europe, and the Asia. This fact significantly alleviates the geostrategic position of Serbia because it is included in the long-term geopolitical interests of the great powers, in our case Russia and Turkey. Serbia is the key country in the Western Balkans, and in order to have a successful political strategy in the region, Turkey and Russia strive to have good relations and establish strong economic and political cooperation with Serbia. For Russia, that was not an issue as Serbia has been one of the Russian most loyal partners in the region. While Turkey, with a changed foreign policy approach was slowly going towards the goal of establishing a strategic partnership with Serbia.

4.1. Serbia in the New Century

The first part of the chapter describes the most important events that have marked the political changes in Serbia since 2000s. One such change was the ousting of Slobodan Milošević from power, and formation of the first democratic government in Serbia since the introduction of multi-party system. The internal political issues Serbia was facing are assessed, including the independence of Montenegro and unilateral proclamation of

[203] Bojan Savić. "Where is Serbia? Traditions of Spatial Identity and State Positioning in Serbian Geopolitical Culture." *Geopolitics* 19, no. 3 (2014): 684-718; Dragoljub Sekulović, and Gigović Ljubomir. "Evropska komponenta geopolitičkog položaja Srbije." *Vojno delo* 3 (2008).
[204] Corridor 10 is one of the Pan-European Corridors, that passes through Serbia and connects it with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Greece.

independence of Kosovo. Serbian foreign policy priorities are also evaluated, as Serbia's relations with other great powers are briefly examined.

Among the most important events that took place in Serbia at the beginning of the new century were the October 5th Revolution that resulted in the overthrow of President Slobodan Milošević's (1991-2000) from power after the presidential elections in 2000, and his extradition to the Hague Tribunal.[205] The background to this revolutionary event for Serbia goes back to the 1990s, when the opposition tried to endanger Milošević's nationalist government, by organizing demonstrations when the authorities did not initially recognize the victory of the opposition at the local elections in about 40 big cities in 1996.[206] Three months of protests followed, after which the election results were confirmed. Furthermore, after the NATO intervention and the war in Kosovo in 1999, which will be elaborated in the second part of the chapter, the dissatisfaction of the citizens grew, and major protests in Belgrade and in other cities around Serbia were organized. Nevertheless, Milošević was still in power. In 2000 he changed the federal constitution in order to further strengthen his presidential post and scheduled the presidential elections for September 24, 2000.[207] Vojislav Koštunica, as the candidate of the opposition bloc DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia), defeated Slobodan Milošević in the presidential elections of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in September 2000.[208] Koštunica won 50.2% (2.470.304) of votes against Milošević, who had 37.1% of votes (1.826.799) in the first round of the elections.[209] DOS has also won on the local and parliamentary level, and soon they would form the majority in the Parliament. However, Milošević's authorities refused to accept the results.[210] The leaders of DOC called

[205] Slobodan Milošević was the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia 1989-1991, President of the Republic of Serbia 1991-1997, and President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1997-2000. To get more detailed insights about the events of 5th October which preceded Milošević's fall, read Bujošević, Dragan, and Ivan Radovanović. *The fall of Milošević.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; Ivana Spasić, and Milan Subotić. *Revolution and order: Serbia after October 2000*. Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Beograd, 2001.

[206] Jovan Živanović. "Revizija petooktobarske revoulcija: pravno-politička analiza." *Hereticus - Časopis za preispitivanje prošlosti* vol. 1-2 (2021): 23-35.

[207] The constitutional changes were that the President should be elected directly, not by the Federal Assembly as it was foreseen by the Constitution. Besides the presidential elections, parliamentary elections for the Federal Assembly, and local elections in Serbia were also scheduled for the same day.

[208] Vojislav Koštunica, as the candidate of the united opposition of Serbia (DOS) became the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 2000-2003. He was the Prime Minister 2004-2007 and 2007-2008.

[209] Vladimir Goati. "The Nature of the and the October Overthrow in Serbia." In *Revolution and order: Serbia after October 2000,* eds. Ivana Spasić and Milan Subotić (pp. 45-59), Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, 2001.

[210] The elections could have not been characterized as fair and clean, as the ruling party had the control over media and other institutions in the state. Many irregularities, vote thefts and falsifications were reported as well. Even the Federal Electoral Commission was reported to have committed irregularities, by claiming that Koštunica did not win 50+1% of the votes that was enough for the victory in the first round. After a filed

citizens to take the streets. Mass demonstrations lasted for days until they culminated on October 5th when people from all over Serbia took the streets of Belgrade demanding the recognition of the presidential elections, and Milošević's departure. Milošević finally admitted defeat and was ousted from power.[211]

Loss of power for Milošević meant his extradition to the Hague Tribunal, as charges against him and his closest allies were filed in 1999, by the Tribunal. The International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was a tribunal established by the UN for war crimes committed during the conflict in Yugoslavia in the 1990s.[212] The Tribunal was founded in 1993, and it was the first international Tribunal for war crimes founded by the UN, after the Military Tribunal of Nuremberg and Tokyo.[213] On the basis of the Law on the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2001, a decree on the extradition of Slobodan Milošević to The Hague Tribunal was passed. Milošević was arrested and extradited in June 2001, and accused of a joint criminal enterprise in complicity, and according to the second amended indictment, he was accused on 66 counts of crimes against humanity and violation of the rules and customs of war.[214] He 'died of natural causes' in 2006, while still being in trial in the Hague Tribunal.[215]

Leaders of 'the anti-Milošević' coalition, whose backbone were Vojislav Koštunica and Zoran Đinđić soon formed a new political establishment in Serbia. Koštunica was the elected President of state from 2000-2003, while Đinđić formed the new Government and

complaint from the opposition, the Federal Constitutional Court proclaimed that the first round of elections should be repeated. See Vladimir Goati. "The Nature of the and the October Overthrow in Serbia." In *Revolution and order: Serbia after October 2000*, eds. Ivana Spasić and Milan Subotić (pp. 45-59), Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, 2001.

[211] **Igor Ivanov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time,** arrived in Belgrade on October 6th, when he met with both Vojislav Koštunica and later Slobodan Milošević. Ivanov said that "Russia is following the development of the situation in Yugoslavia with great concern after elections." Ivanov told a news conference at the Russian embassy that he had arrived in Belgrade on Vladimir Putin's orders to "get first-hand information on the situation" and conveyed Moscow's position that the political crisis in the FRY should be resolved in a "civilized manner, within of the law." Ljiljana Bukvić, and Bojan Cvejić. "Why are Russians and Serbs "brothers"?" Antidot April 8, 2015, Accessed June 24, 2022, https://www.anti.media/istrazivanja/analize/odnos-srbije-i-rusije-zasto-su-srbi-i-rusi-braca/.

[212] See "About the ICTY", The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Accessed June 22, 2022, https://www.icty.org/en/about.

[213] "About the ICTY", The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Accessed June 22, 2022, https://www.icty.org/en/about.

[214] The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Case No. IT-99-37-PT. Cited in Jovan Živanović. "Revizija petooktobarske revoulcija: pravno-politička analiza." *Hereticus - Časopis za preispitivanje prošlosti* vol. 1-2 (2021): 23-35, p. 32.

[215] After the extradition of Milošević to the Hague war crimes tribunal, his wife and his son fled to Russia, where they were granted political asylum. Prime Minister Đinđić asked Russian authorities to have them delivered to Serbia, but that never happened.

became the Prime Minister. Even though Koštunica was the man who defeated Milošević, Zoran Đinđić was the one who was seen as the bearer of democratic changes in Serbia. He was a pro-Western politician with a vision of Serbia as a modern country, integrated into Euro-Atlantic political and security structures. The newly formed democratic government led by Zoran Đinđić (2000-2003) had given the promise of reforms and of taking concrete steps towards the goal of integrating Serbia into the community of European states.[216] Đinđić's established good relations with the Western countries, including the United States, Great Britain, Germany. The EU membership been formulated as a strategic foreign policy goal, and a tool that would help normalize the process of domestic progress.[217] As the main objectives of the Government he was leading, Đinđić defined "forming stable institutions, a high qualified labour force, and increased living standards and employment."[218]

Still, the new leadership faced many challenges and unsolved issues. First of all, the establishment of democratic institutions, finding a solution to the final status of Kosovo, cooperation with the Hague tribunal, then the economic reconstruction of the country, consequences of the international sanctions introduced from the previous conflicts, but also corruption and fight against organized crime. The infrastructure was destroyed, and hyperinflation and abnormal indebtedness of the country damaged the country's economic system. GDP was decreasing, and social welfare was in decline. In 2000 the unemployment rate was over 12%, climbing to 21% in 2005, and trade was suffering from constant deficit.[219] An intensive process of privatization was carried out, whereas almost 70% of the state-owned capital was sold. All of this has only increased the dissatisfaction of the middle class that was mostly affected by reforms.

The promised transformation, however, has turned into an uncertain and long path, after Zoran Đinđić was assassinated in March 2003. Đinđić's assassination is described as the 'slap in the face of democracy' in Serbia. Prime Minister was murdered in front of the Serbian Government building, by the leaders of a criminal organization, the *Zemun clan*,

[216] Zoran Đinđić was the first Prime Minister of Serbia after the fall of Slobodan Milošević, from 2000-2003, as the representative of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia. He was the president of the Democratic Party (DS) 1994-2000, and the major of Belgrade during 1997. He was assassinated in 2003, at the entrance to the Serbian Government building.
[217] Irena Ristić. "Serbia'a EU Integration Process: The Momentum of 2008." *Panoeconomicus* 56, no.1 (2009): 112-120.
[218] "Exposition of Dr. Zoran Djindjic in the Assembly of Serbia." Zoran Đinđić Virtual Museum, Accessed June 23, http://zorandjindjic.org/eng/written-legacy/documents/expos%c3%a9/.
[219] Dejan Šabić, et al. "The impact of FDI on the transitional economy in Serbia–changes and challenges." *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica* 9, no. 3 (2012): 65-84.

organization that operated for the State Security Service – Special Operations Unit, for the previous establishment. Soon after the assassination, the state of emergency was declared in the country. Every right to assembly was abolished, the right to political action and trade union action, and right to deliver free information have also been abolished.[220]

After passing of the vote of no confidence of the Government led by Zoran Živković (2003 – 2004), extraordinary parliamentary elections have been called in December 2003. A minority government was formed by the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), G17+, the Serbian Renewal Movement and New Serbia. Vojislav Koštunica, who previously served as the country's President became the Prime Minister, and new presidential elections were scheduled for next year. Boris Tadić (2004-2012) from Democratic Party (DS) won the presidential elections in 2004.[221] Serbian establishment was now operating in a cohabitation with Prime Minister and President of the country coming from different parties. It was believed that with Koštunica and Tadić, the ideals of achieving democratic freedom and social and economic prosperity, would be accomplished.[222]

In ideological sense, Vojislav Koštunica was a conservative liberal. He led two Governments in eight years. His first Government (2004-2007) partially consolidated the national economy, completed the process of privatization, and opened the prospect of a slight rise in living standards. Koštunica's second Government (2007-2008) was formed after the extraordinary parliamentary elections that followed the adoption of the new Constitution in 2006 after Montenegro's secession. This Government lasted for ten months, following the declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008, after which new extraordinary parliamentary elections were held, and Mirko Cvetković (2008-2012) became the Prime Minister.[223]

Boris Tadić was a pro-Western politician and statesman who advocated Serbia's membership in the EU as the ultimate goal. During his presidency, Serbia signed the EU Agreement on Stabilization and Association Process in 2008 and was given the status of the

[220] Slobodan Antonić. "Parlamentarizam u Srbiji posle 2000 godine." *Sociološki pregled* 37, no. 3-4 (2003): 209-224.
[221] Boris Tadić was elected President of Serbia twice. His first term was 2004-2008, and second term 2008-2012. Before that, he served as the Minister of Defence of Serbia and Montenegro 2003-2004, the Minister of Telecommunications of FRY 2000-2001, and the vice-president of the FRY Assembly. Tadić was the President of the Democratic Party (DS) 2004-2012. Democratic Oposition of Serbia (DOS) disintegrated before the 2004 elections, and Democratic Party (DS) went to the elections independently with Tadić as the list holder.
[222] Read more in Audrey Helfant Budding. "The Man Who Overthrew Milošević: Vojislav Kostunica, One Year Later." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2002): 159–165.
[223] After the October 5th changes in 2000, the only Government that served its full four-year term was the Government of Mirko Cvetković.

EU candidate country in 2012. Secession of Montenegro in 2006, and proclamation of unilateral independence of Kosovo in 2008, were the two main events that significantly affected the positioning of Serbia in the international arena, during Boris Tadić's eight-year presidency. Proclamation of Kosovo's independence has marked the beginning of a period when Serbia started conducting a balanced foreign policy between the East and West, primarily between Russia and EU.[224] Moreover, Tadić formulated Serbia's 'four pillar' foreign policy where alongside EU and USA, China and Russia were characterized as the country's strategic allies. Besides, Tadić has managed to maintain good regional relations with the neighbouring countries, including Turkey. Numerous visits were realized, and bilateral agreements were signed particularly in this period with Turkey. Tadić was the first Serbian President to have visited Srebrenica, and during his time in office, the initiative on condemning the crimes that happened in Srebrenica was put to motion, and Srebrenica Resolution was adopted. We will elaborate on these happenings in the succeeding parts of this chapter.

After the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012, a new political shift happened in Serbia. The majority in the Parliament now was formed by the coalition of the two parties, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), and Serbian Socialist Party (SPS).[225] The SNS presidential candidate Tomislav Nikolić (2012-2017) won the elections and became the President of Serbia.[226] Nikolić political orientation was closer to the central political spectrum, with a moderate foreign policy approach and pro-European politics. He encouraged cooperation both with EU and Russia. This was the foreign policy course that Serbia followed in the upcoming years, the 'sitting on two chairs foreign policy' which commenced during Tadić's establishment. Although Serbia officially opened negotiation talks with EU in 2014, this period of Serbian international politics was marked by intensified close relations and cooperation with Russia. Agreement on Strategic Cooperation between the two countries was signed in 2013, as well as the Agreement on Serbian participation in

[224] Birgül Demirtaş. "Reconsidering Turkish-Serbian Ties within the Context of Balkan Politics: Identity Perceptions and Impact of Global, Regional and National Levels." Report. Current Turkey-Serbia Relations, Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, (2016): 1-10, p. 3.
[225] These two parties will be the coalition partners in the next five government of Serbia until present day.
[226] Tomislav Nikolić was the President of Serbia from 2012 to 2017. Before that he served as the President of Serbian National Assembly in 2007, and vice-president of Serbian government 1998-2000. He was the member of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), that supported Milošević, and later the founder of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS).

the South Stream gas pipeline project. These events will also be assessed in more details in the upcoming part of this chapter.

4.2. Serbia at the Crossroad of Great Powers Interests

Serbia's commitment to EU membership has been a point of consensus among all Serbian governments since 2001. However, after the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008, preserving country's constitutional order and territorial integrity, became one of the most common narratives in Serbian foreign policy discourse. In this kind of political environment that was constantly changing, Serbia was facing the necessity of determining and clearly defining its position in regards of cooperation with other states and great powers.

In 2004, the National Assembly of Serbia adopted a Resolution on Accession to the EU, which underlined that the country's accession to the Union is a strategic goal of the country. In 2007 however, the National Assembly adopted the Resolution on the Protection of Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, and the Constitutional Order of the Republic of Serbia. The Resolution stated that the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia declares **military neutrality** in relation to the existing military alliances until a possible referendum is called. It is often argued whether this Resolution represented the realistic strategic goals that Serbia was aspiring to. Since 2007, there hasn't been any other political initiative nor other similar relevant strategic documents that would support this foreign policy direction of Serbia. It was believed that declaring military neutrality was a political move by the Serbian establishment with the goal of gaining 'political points', and support from Russia, which did not look favourably NATO's expansion in Europe. The part of the Resolution on protection of territorial integrity, of course alluded Kosovo, and non-recognition of its independence. Scholars argue that the adoption of the Resolution was in fact the result of "lack of a coherent policy of all relevant political factors in the country towards Kosovo." [227]

Serbia's foreign policy has never been elaborated in a written form, so basically Serbia does not have an official foreign policy doctrine or strategy. The foreign policy course of the

[227] After Ahtisaari Plan that envisioned the independence of Kosovo was presented, according to some sources, "the ruling party in Serbia was accusing NATO of supporting Kosovo's separatism." That was one of the reasons why Serbia started closer cooperation with Russia, which supported Serbian politics on Kosovo. Read more in Miodrag L. Gordić, and Ivan B. Petrović. "Model of military neutrality as perspective of development of the Republic of Serbia." *Baština* 47 (2019): 117-134., p. 126-127.

state can be followed only through the analysis of the statements of the President of the Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[228]

For instance, in the inaugural speech of President Boris Tadić in 2004, it was pointed out that Serbia's foreign policy priorities were: "European integration, good neighbourliness, as well as equal relations with three centripetal points of world politics: Brussels, Washington and Moscow."[229] The statement of the Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić in 2007, after the formation of the government, was similar when he spoke about the EU, Russia, and the United States as the 'three pillars' of Serbian foreign policy. At the Ambassadorial conference in 2009, Serbian President Boris Tadić added People's Republic of China, as the fourth pillar, and pointed out that and that this will be Serbian main foreign policy doctrine for a long time. [230] In the following part of the chapter, we will briefly assess the four foreign policy pillars of Serbia, in order to better understand how Serbia positions itself regarding the interests of the aforementioned great powers.

4.2.1. European Union and Serbia

After the governmental changes in 2000, the membership in the EU became one of the leading foreign goals of the new political elites in Serbia. Even as the member of the FRY, in 2000 Serbia became part of the Stabilization and Association Process, and in 2004 the National Assembly of Serbia adopted a Resolution on joining the EU, making membership in the Union one of the country's strategic goals.[231] Serbia has been granted the EU candidate status in 2012, to officially open the negotiations in 2014.[232] The perspective of European

[228] First example can be seen in the exposition of Goran Svilanović, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2001, partnership with the Western states and membership in the EU were highlighted as the foreign policy objectives of Republic of Serbia. "Exposition by Goran Svilanović, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the Federal Assembly of FR Yugoslavia, Belgrade, October 24, 2001." In *Serbia's foreign policy: strategies and documents,* European Movement Serbia, Belgrade 2011., p. 286-312; See also Aleksandar Gajić, and Slobodan Janković. "Četiri stuba srpske spoljne politike." *Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu,* (2012): 175-198.
[229] "Speech by Boris Tadic after taking office as President of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, July 11, 2004." In *Serbia's foreign policy: strategies and documents,* European Movement Serbia, Belgrade 2011., p. 314-319.
[230] Aleksandar Gajić, and Slobodan Janković. "Četiri stuba srpske spoljne politike." *Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu* (2012): 175-198., p. 177.
[231] In 2008, Serbia signed the Agreement on Stabilization and Association Process as an independent country. "Nacionalna Strategija Srbije za pristupanje Srbije i Crne Gore Evropskoj uniji." Narodna Skupština Republike Srbije, Accessed March 17, 2022, http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/documents/seio/NAC_STRAT_UNDP_2006_gledanje.pdf.
[232] Gradually, after a number of EU member states recognized Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008, some political parties from the Democratic Opposition began pushing for a halt to European integration until the EU clearly declares its opinion. As it became clear that political conditionality will remain the EU's main instrument for implementing its policy objectives, some scholars think it the current "rather uncertain" prospects for EU membership may be insufficient anchor for further implementation of the

integration, for Serbia was and still represents important motive for the process of democratic reforms.[233] It has prompted a number of military security reforms, reforms in education and health sector, progress in human rights and fight against the organized crime, with the ultimate goal of full EU membership.

However, the achievements in the accession process are extremely modest, with only 16 open chapters and two temporarily closed, out of total 35 chapters of accession negotiations, four years after the formal opening of negotiations (2014-2018). European policy of political conditioning towards the countries of the Western Balkans was much stricter than in the case of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, and that the criteria for accession are much more numerous.[234] It is thought that the current 'rather uncertain' prospects for EU membership may be insufficient anchor for further implementation of the necessary reforms in Serbia.

Nevertheless, EU is one of the biggest economic partners of Serbia. The total volume of trade between Serbia and the EU has been constantly growing. From 2011, when the trade volume was $1.5 billion, it grew to $3.2 billion in 2021.[235] Also, from 2015-2017 close to $1.6 billion of foreign direct investment have been arriving from the EU annually, which is almost three times more than in 2012, when the number was $581 million euros. For instance, in 2016, out of total $1.9 billion of FDI, 81% came from the EU.[236]

Right now, one of the biggest obstacles of Serbia's entry to the family of European communities is the status of Kosovo. And the EU had made it clear that without an established solution between Belgrade and Priština, EU membership for Serbia is not an option. It is stated that EU is committed to stabilizing the region by recognizing Kosovo's independence and integrating Western Balkan countries into the Union.[237] Citizens however

necessary reforms. See more in Milica Uvalić. "Integracija Srbije sa Evropskom Unijom." In *Evropska Unija i Srbija* (pp.1-13), Beograd: Ekonomski fakultet, 2012..

[233] For accomplished reforms see European Commission Reports.

[234] Milica Uvalić. "Integracija Srbije sa Evropskom Unijom." In *Evropska Unija i Srbija* (pp.1-13), Beograd: Ekonomski fakultet, 2012.

[235] "European Union, Trade in goods with Serbia." European Commission Report, May 10, 2022, Accessed June 20, 2022, https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_serbia_en.pdf.

[236] "Serbia's cooperation with China, the European Union, Russia and the United States of America." Directorate-General for External Policies by European Parliament, November 2017: 4-48. Accessed March, 17, 2022, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ab5192c5-de27-11e7-a506-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

[237] Ana Jović-Lazić, and Ivona Lađevac. "Odnosi Srbije i Rusije–uticaj na međunarodni položaj naše zemlje." *Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu* (2018): 173-196.

have divided opinions when it comes to European integration. According to a survey conducted by the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy in 2020, more than half of Serbian citizens do not support the country's membership in the EU. The results show that 51% of respondents do not support Serbia's membership in the Union, compared to 46% of those who support it. This indicates that the number of citizens who disapprove of European integration has increased since 2017, when it was 35%.[238] Only 9% of respondents believe that European integration is the main foreign policy priority of Serbia, and only a fifth of the respondents believe that the state should harmonize its foreign policy with Brussels.

4.2.2. China and Serbia

Relations between Serbia and the People's Republic of China, represent the continuity of good relations between Yugoslavia and China. For China, Serbia is of special importance because it is located at the crossroads of Southeast Europe, on important routes that enable good communication in the east-west and north-south directions, and is in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, whose market it is interested in.[239] In such a situation, it is not surprising that China is showing increasing strategic interest in Serbia. Good political and economic relations between Serbia and China led to the establishment of a strategic partnership in 2009, which was later expanded into a "comprehensive strategic partnership" in 2013 and then in 2016.[240] The Sino-Serbian Strategic Partnership, as a traditional friendship between the two countries, contributed to the conclusion of a series of agreements on joint projects in the fields of energy, transport, agriculture, telecommunications, finance, scientific and cultural exchanges.[241] The importance of establishing a strategic partnership between Serbia and China had positive effects on optimizing Serbia's foreign policy position in international relations and strengthening its rating within the "16 + 1" mechanism, which

[238] "Many Faces of Serbian Foreign Policy Public Opinion and Geopolitical Balancing." Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, November 20, 2020, Accessed June 21, 2022, https://bezbednost.org/en/publication/many-faces-of-serbian-foreign-policy-public-opinion-and-geopolitical-balancing/

[239] Duško Dimitrijević. "Odnosi Srbije i Kine na početku 21. veka." *Medjunarodni problemi 70*, vol. 1 (2018): 49-67.

[240] "Bilateral relations China." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Serbia, Accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/china.

[241] "Agreement on economic and technical cooperation between Serbia and China in infrastructure projects" in 2009; "Agreement on cooperation in the field of agriculture" in 2007; "Memorandum on cooperation in the field of safety and inspection of industrial products" in 2007; "Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation" in 2009; "Protocol on Cooperation between the ministries of foreign affairs of Serbia and China" in 2009. "Bilateral relations China." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Serbia, Accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/china.

was established to strengthen cooperation between China and Central and Eastern Europe and implement *China's New Silk Road* development strategy. [242]

As the permanent member of the UN Security Council, China supports the territorial integrity of Serbia, does not support the unilaterally proclaimed declaration of Kosovo's independence, and expresses its strong commitment to the respect of the UN Resolution 1244 on Kosovo.[243] For China, Belgrade has every right to protect its territorial integrity. China believes that the only acceptable solution for both sides in the dispute, Belgrade and Priština can only be reached through new and direct negotiations.

Also, the boosting economic ties between two countries are gaining on importance. China is Serbia's biggest economic partner in Asia. In 2019, the trade volume was $2.67 billion, where $2.36 billion were imports from China, and $316 million were exports from Serbia.[244] In 2020, trade between two countries amounted to $3.38 billion, whereas the export from Serbia have arisen to $338 million, and the import from China to $3 billion.[245] From the official channels of Serbian establishment on numerous occasions it was highlighted that Serbia is proud of its exceptional bilateral relations with China, which are given a special dimension by the close and friendly relations between the Presidents of Serbia and China.[246]

4.2.3. United States and Serbia

When we talk about the bilateral relations between Serbia and the United States, it should be kept in mind that they are still marked by the 'burden of the past', in particular by the politics U.S. was conducting during and after the war in Yugoslavia.[247] Although the

[242] Read more in Ivana Miljković Božić. "Geoeconomic Aspects of the Coopertion between the Republic of Serbia and the People's Republic of China: Situation and Perspectives." *Sociological Review* 55, no. 2 (2021): 314-351.
[243] UN Resolution 1244 was addopted by the UN to solve the political crisis in Kosovo in 1999.
[244] "Bilateral relations China." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Serbia, Accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/china.
[245] "Bilateral relations China." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Serbia, Accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/china.
[246] "Bilateral relations China." Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Serbia, Accessed June 20, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/china.
[247] The United States played a major role in resolving the Yugoslav crisis, as they insisted on imposing economic sanctions on Yugoslavia, as well as on military action. Also, the 1999 NATO military intervention on Belgrade was led by the United States. These events are something that Serbian people remember with remorse, and the image of US as the enemy of the Serbian people is still present among Serbian population. For 43% of Serbians, USA is seen as the country's biggest enemy. Additionally, the citizens of Serbia are largely opposed to Serbia joining NATO. According to public opinion polls in 2020, about 80% of the population is not favour of joining the Alliance, and 54% has a negative opinion about NATO itself. See

priorities of American foreign policy have changed after the events of 11 September, USA was still interested in the Western Balkans and this part of Europe.

The main goal of the United States in the Western Balkans is preserving peace and stability and diverting the Western Balkan countries from the 'negative' Russian influence. Under the Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, the State Department has established a special envoy for Western Balkans. When it comes to Serbia specifically, the U.S. is one of the main actors involved in solving the issue of Kosovo's independence and trying to help Serbia normalize relations with Kosovo. Additionally, United States support Serbia's European integration, and encourages integration into NATO structures. While visiting Sarajevo, Belgrade and Priština in 2009, US Vice President Joseph Biden sought to reaffirm the importance of US policy in the region. He reminded of "irrevocability of the newly acquired independence of the Kosovo Albanians" and the necessity of further strengthening the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[248] Biden reiterated that the United States will advocate for the accession of Serbia and all other Western Balkan countries to the EU. In general, Serbia strives to develop partnership with U.S. considering that U.S. is the world power that has a crucial role in many international organizations that Serbia is already part of or strives to become a member of. American support is essential for the efforts that Serbia invests in the EU accession process.

Conclusion

It cannot be concluded that there is a clearly defined foreign policy direction in Serbia. Despite the many resolutions and memoranda being adopted, they were quite contradictory when it came to Serbia's foreign interests. EU remains Serbian priority but, as the issue of Kosovo's independence became number one priority of Serbian political agenda, Serbia started playing a more balancing politics. It appears that for the establishment in Serbia, the processes of EU integration and resolving the issue of Kosovo were seen as separate processes, when the reality is different. Serbia's entry to the EU, amongst other things is conditioned by resolving the issue on status of Kosovo. Formally, the four-pillar

"Istraživanje: 80% srpskih građana protiv članstva u NATO, ali samo 33% protiv saradnje." European Western Balkans, November 17, 2020, Accessed June 21, 2022, https://europeanwesternbalkans.rs/istrazivanje-80-srpskih-gradjana-protiv-clanstva-u-nato-ali-samo-33-protiv-saradnje/.

[248] Dragan Đukanović, and Ivona Lađevac. "Prioriteti spoljnopolitičke strategije Republike Srbije." *Medjunarodni Problemi* 61, no. 3 (2009): 343-364., p. 354.

foreign policy continued, but as Euroscepticism grew Serbia started shifting more towards Moscow.

Formulation of Serbia's foreign policy was closely connected to the internal political affairs in Serbia. After the political changes of October 5th, the final decision on the status of Kosovo has not yet been reached, while the negotiations under the supervision of the UN were on-going. Parallelly, Montenegro has initiated the process of legally breaking away from the state union with Serbia (SCG) and becoming an independent country. The upcoming part of the chapter will tackle these unresolved national issues of Serbia.

4.3. Unsolved National Issues

The independence of Montenegro in 2006, and later the succession of Kosovo, brought new challenges for Serbia. In just a span of two years from 2006-2008, Serbia faced loss of its territory, which implied redefinition of state borders, and adoption of a new Constitution. In this part of the chapter, we will assess Montenegro's and Kosovo's independence. We will shortly examine what preceded Montenegro's referendum for independence and Kosovo's declaration on independence, and what were the reactions of Serbian government officials. In addition, Russian and Turkish involvement in these affairs will be shortly assessed as the actors of relevance whose relations with Serbia will be examined in detail in chapters five and six.

4.3.1. Independence of Montenegro

Montenegro has always been in the centre of Serbian politics and finding the solution for Montenegro's independence has been of great importance for the whole region. There is no doubt that the referendum on the independence of Montenegro was experienced by the nationalist elite in Serbia as the hardest possible hit. According to some analysts, not even Kosovo's secession would be experienced as "dramatically as betrayal of the Serbian brothers in the 2006 referendum."[249]

The referendum of 21st May 2006 was primarily a democratic victory of Montenegrin people. The issue of the independence was raised during the second half of the 1990s, when Milo Đukanović became the President of Montenegro in 1997, and Montenegrin leadership

[249] Ivan Torov. "Beogradske nacionalističke frustracije." *Helsinška povelja* 095-096 (2006): 4-6., p. 4.

slowly started distancing from the aggressive nationalist politics of Milošević.[250] Đukanović described Milošević as an 'outdated politician' and made it clear that Montenegro will strive to become part of the international community of democracies, with the Euro-Atlantic integration as one of the main priorities of the country. This rift between the two ruling coalitions in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), has marked a turning point in the political life of Montenegro and determined a different course of its policy in the future. After the collapse of the Milošević's regime in October 2000, the first demand of Đukanović's party was the independence of Montenegro. The existence of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was put under the question mark, as Đukanović and his party were constantly campaigning for independence, which ignited dissatisfaction in Serbia. In 2002, the EU brokered the signing of the Belgrade Agreement on the foundation of **State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SCG**) as a federation of two semi-independent states, with a limited duration.[251] The signing of the Agreement was witnessed by the EU High Commissioner for Foreign Policy and Security, Javier Solana. The EU and Solana himself openly expressed their preferences for the survival of Serbia and Montenegro and pointed out that it was a faster path towards European integration for both countries. However, the Montenegrin ruling coalition showed absolute determination to use the constitutional clause on right to call a referendum after the expiration of a three-year period as promised by the EU.[252] When the clause on independence was officially put in motion, the EU engaged in finding the best solution acceptable for both states, but especially for the two opposing blocs in Montenegro.[253] The EU offered a rather unusual election model for referendum: the majority of the vote for independence was set at 55% of the total vote turnout. The referendum of 21st May 2006 resulted in over the required 55% of votes (55.5%), and the turnout of 86.5% of voters verified the legitimacy of the referendum. Accordingly, EU member states, the USA, and permanent member states of the UN Security Council

[250] Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) whose leader was Đukanović, won the majority of seats in the Parliament in 1998, and formed the government. Until 1998, Milošević had the support of the Montenegrin Government. See Beáta Huszka."The dispute over Montenegrin independence." In *Montenegro in transition, Problems of Identity and Statehood.*, ed. Florian Bieber (pp.43-63), Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft Baden-Baden, 2003.

[251] "Agreement on Principles of Relations between Serbia and Montenegro within the State Union." Council of the European Union, March 14, 2002, Accessed June 24, 2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/sg/69898.pdf.

[252] "Agreement on Principles of Relations between Serbia and Montenegro within the State Union." Council of the European Union, March 14, 2002, Accessed June 24, 2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/sg/69898.pdf.

[253] There were two blocs, the Independence bloc fighting for international recognition of Montenegro, led by President Đukanović, and parties gathered around him, and the Unionist Bloc in the favour of remaining in the Union with Serbia, which consisted of allies of the former Milošević's regime.

announced their recognition of Montenegro as an independent state. The formal separation from Serbia happened on June 3rd. Serbia and Montenegro agreed that Serbia will be the legal successor of the State Union, which meant inherited membership in international organizations, while Montenegro joined them as a new country.

For Serbian political elite, in the first place Prime Minister Koštunica and President Tadić, secession of Montenegro was 'a national defeat.' In the eyes of Serbian establishment, Montenegro has been part of Serbia, historically, territorially and in national sense. It can be often read in literature Montenegro being referred to as 'the Serbian Sparta', and how these two brother countries are connected by the same religion, same language, culture, and century old historical ties. Therefore, Serbian officials, and Serbian citizens in general, were convinced that no separation will happen, as Montenegrins and Serbs are brothers, and that Montenegrin nation and nationality as such don't exist. Therefore, the results of the referendum were a big surprize for Serbia. Although with hesitation, under the pressure of international community, Serbian establishment had no other choice than to recognize the independence of Montenegro.[254] Koštunica didn't even congratulate Montenegrin leadership, nor anyone from the Serbian establishment attend the independence ceremony.

Serbia and Montenegro quickly established bilateral diplomatic relations and opened embassies in the capital cities, allowing their citizens to travel between the two countries with only identity cards. Ever since, the concern for the position of Serbian people in Montenegro has been one of the main topics for Serbia. It has been emphasized by Serbia, that Serbs in Montenegro are marginalized in every way, that they were repressed and that they were denied of their own identity. Montenegro has often been accused of administering 'anti-Serbian' policy. These claims were untrue as Serbs represent the biggest national minority group in Montenegro, and they are granted all their rights. Still, the ideology of nationalism continued to dominate Serbian politics, especially after Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) entered the Parliament. In the upcoming years, Serbian government has continued to meddle in Montenegro's political affairs, relying on pro-Serbian nationalist parties in Montenegro, as well as the strong influence that the Serbian Orthodox Church has

[254] After the referendum, Serbian politicians continued to behave as if nothing has happened, and as if this was just a "passing episode." A high ranking official of the Democratic party of Serbia (DSS) Miloš Aligrudić, stated that Montenegro will very quickly "come to its senses" and realize that it has made a strategic, historical, national, political, economic, and social mistake by leaving the fraternal embrace of Serbia., Sonja Biserko. "Zatečena Srbija." *Helsinška povelja* 095-096 (2006): 3-4., p. 4.

in Montenegro. This has been particularly visible in recent years, creating constant tensions between the governments of Podgorica and Belgrade.[255]

Russia was amongst the first countries, after Island and Switzerland to officially recognize Montenegro in 2006 as a sovereign and independent state, even before Serbia.[256] The two countries reciprocally opened embassies in the capital cities, first Russia in 2007 then Montenegro, therefore confirming their desire and readiness to continue developing good relations.[257] There were claims that one of the reasons for the recognition of independence, was significant Russian investment in Montenegro, which began to intensify in this period. As early as 2005, Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, owner of *Rusal*, bought a 58.7% stake in *Aluminium Plant Podgorica (KAP).*[258]

As it was brought previously, the turning point in relations between Russia and Montenegro, was the post-independence period, when the Russian investment in Montenegro rose sharply. By 2007, around 30 thousand Russians had bought land and real estate property and invested nearly $2 billion in Montenegro.[259] A briefing paper requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, shows that that Russian Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in 2006 were the highest in Montenegro.[260] This investment trend has continued, as evidenced by the fact that in 2016 FDI from Russia to Montenegro represented around 30% of Montenegro's GDP, as Russia was the country's

[255] In 2008, when Montenegro recognized the independence of Kosovo, Montenegrin ambassador in Serbia was declared persona non-grata. In 2015, when Montenegro received the official invitation for NATO membership, President Tomislav Nikolic stated that this step represented "Direct opposition to Serbia 's interests ". One year later in 2016, on the day of parliamentary elections in Montenegro a group of Serbian citizens were arrested under the counts of planed actions against the Montenegrin government and President. The state leadership of Serbia distanced itself from the arrests.

[256] The recognition of Montenegro by Russia arrived the day before the national holiday Day of Russia, on 12th of June, which one of the most important holidays of the Russian people in general. It can be argued that recognition of Montenegro was greatly influenced by the historical connection and historical heritage of the two nations, which have had good diplomatic relations for decades.

[257] In 2009, the former President of Montenegro Filip Vujanović met with the then President Dmitry Medvedev and Patriarch of Russia Kirill, when he was presented an award for his contribution to strengthening the unity of Orthodox peoples. "Bilateralni odnosi." Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova, Accessed January 14, 2021. https://mvp.gov.me/rubrike/bilateralni-odnosi/bilateralni-odnosi/ruska-federacija.

[258] Later information emerged that Deripaska helped the Montenegrin government win the 2006 referendum, when he hired Paul Manafor, a political operative who managed President Donald Trump's election campaign, to support Montenegro's independence referendum in 2006. Dušica Tomović. "Trump Campaign Chief 'Worked for Montenegrin Independence'". Balkan Insight, April 12, 2017, Accessed January 14, 2021. https://balkaninsight.com/2017/04/12/trump-campaign-chief-worked-for-montenegrin-independence-04-11-2017/?fbclid=IwAR0nfrGy5kMaD0WFp-8vv3YyPsDozGAar849IfmVnOshBiqDIuo8rxsLStU.

[259] Ivana Gardašević. "Russia and Montenegro: How and Why a Centuries Old Relationship Ruptured." *Connections QJ* 17, no. 1 (2018): 61-75.

[260] Ibid.

single largest investor in that year.[261] Those direct investments were interpreted as a Russian way of creating a well-grounded basis for further political action in the Western Balkans.

In 2006, Turkey was also amongst first countries to recognize Montenegro's independence and establish diplomatic relations. Turkey opened embassies both in Montenegro, and Serbia. Ever since, Montenegro and Turkey have good and friendly relations which are characterized by strong economic cooperation, increase in trade and foreign direct investment. Turkey also sees Montenegro as one of its important partners in the Balkans, whereas a large number of Montenegrin diaspora resides in Turkey. In Montenegro, where around one fifth of population is Muslim, Turkey wants to strengthen its political influence especially in areas with a predominant Muslim population.

4.3.2. Kosovo's Declaration of Independence

Kosovo, on the other hand, remained the main galvanizer of Serbia's domestic and foreign policy. To understand the issue of Kosovo, first need to go back in past to the beginning of conflict.

The issue of Kosovo goes back in history. After the Balkan wars in 1913, Kosovo became part of Serbia but retained the characteristics of a border area. Amendments to the Constitution of Yugoslavia made in the late 1960s, determined Kosovo was an autonomous region within the territory of Serbia. Following the death of Josip Broz Tito president of SFRY in 1980, the central government started slowly disintegrating. In March the following year, demonstrations and students protests against the Yugoslavian federal government began in Kosovo, where students from Kosovo were asking for better conditions in the dormitories. The Government responded by sending troops to break up the protests, which resulted in thousands getting arrested and injured.[262] As the dissatisfaction was growing, the Government continued with harsh response and repressions throughout the 80s, when Serbian nationalism was on the rise, which again led to new constitutional changes. After the adoption of constitutional amendments in 1989, and Slobodan Milošević's consolidation of power at the time, the province of Kosovo was deprived of its autonomous status, that had

[261] Heather A. Conley, and Matthew Melino. "Russian Malign Influence in Montenegro." Washington: Center for Strategic & International Studies. May 2019.
[262] It is often said that these demonstrations in Kosovo were just the tip of the iceberg that later led to dissolution of Yugoslavia. See Carole Rogel. "Kosovo: Where it all began." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17, no.1 (2003): 167-182.

according to the 1963 Constitution of SFRY.[263] These constitutional changes caused extreme dissatisfaction among Kosovo Albanians (around 90% of population on Kosovo were Albanians, while the rest were Serbs), who sought independence for the first time at the beginning of the disintegration of the SFRY. When Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991, and Yugoslavia started dissolving, Kosovo also proclaimed to be an "independent unit in the Yugoslav community, equal to other republics."[264] Kosovo boycotted Serbian authorities, and in the 1992 unofficial elections, disregarded and unrecognized by Serbia, Ibrahim Rugova was elected as the President of the self-proclaimed republic of Kosovo.[265]

The situation in Kosovo exacerbated again during the 1998/99, when armed clashes began between the paramilitary formation Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and Serbian army.[266] One of the decisive moments that gravely alarmed the international community to act, was the Račak massacre when 45 Kosovan Albanians were brutally murdered by the Serbian forces. The still fresh memories of the ethnic conflict that happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, alarmed the international community that it could not stay aside and watch similar thing to happen again in Kosovo.[267] The Contact Group (United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Russia) succeeded in bringing the conflicted parties to the table in Rambouillet and Paris, where the Rambouillet Accords were presented. However, the

[263] Milošević's rise in Serbian politics is usually linked to the famous sentence: "No one is allowed to beat you"/ "Niko ne sme da vas bije" (translated from Serbian), to the gathered Serbian representatives in Kosovo as a reaction to the complaints of Serbian locals about the actions of the Albanian police. His speech in 1987 was assessed as incendiary in public, but for Milošević it certainly represented the wind in the back, under which the cult of his leadership was created.

[264] In the referendum organized in 1991, the turnout was 99% (out of the 87% of total votes) in favour of an independent and sovereign republic of Kosovo. See Florian Bieber, and Zidas Daskalovski. *Understanding the War in Kosovo.* London: Frank Cass, 2003, p. 61.

[265] Parallel administrations such as Kosovo Parliament and Government were established, that would serve and provide help to Albanian population. Under Rugova's leadership, Kosovo Albanians started with the non-violent and silent resistance that would last for years. During the War in Yugoslavia, Kosovo was left out of the picture, as it was treated as an "internal concern of Serbia which has put it off the bargaining table." See Carole Rogel. "Kosovo: Where it all began." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 17*, no. 1 (2003): 167-182, p. 175.

[266] Between March 1998 and June 1999, during the armed conflict between Serbian army and KLA, many attacks, crimes, slaughters, and human right violations from both sides were committed, people were displaced and deported, and their property was destroyed. Approximately 13,500 people were killed during the war in Kosovo, of which Kosovo Albanians account for the largest number of victims (10.810), Serbs (2.200), and others. It is stated in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that more than 800.000 were displaced from Kosovo in 1998/99. Read more in detailed in Bieber, Florian and Zidas Daskalovski. *Understanding the War in Kosovo.* London: Frank Cass, 2003.

[267] Under international community we refer to member states of the Contact Group (United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Russia), that was established back in 1994 during the War in Yugoslavia.

proposed Agreement, was rejected by Serbian side.[268] This has triggered off a decisive action of the United State under Clinton administration, that started a NATO military intervention under the name Operation Allied Force in March 1999, heavily bombing Serbian targets for 78 days.[269]

The Operation Allied Force however, was conducted "without a UN Security Council resolution explicitly authorizing the attack."[270] This has prompted many political and law analysts to question the legal basis of this decision, as it is already known that UN Charter allows military action only in the case of self-defence, or on the basis of a decision of the Security Council or the UN General Assembly.[271] The Security Council decision could not be reached, due to the expected veto of Russia and China. USA anyhow carried out the intervention and this topic is even today the subject of numerous debates, in which analysts still try to dispute and (dis)approve justification for the legality of this military intervention.

The 'humanitarian intervention' was over with the Kumanovo Agreement in June 1999, when Milošević consented to sign the Military-Technical Agreement between FRY and NATO. This resulted in withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, deployment of KFOR (Kosovo Force) mission under the command of NATO, and adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.[272] The UN Resolution 1244 determined the status of the province of Kosovo as an interim administration of the UN and introduced the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). This was the first time in history that a territory was placed under the administration of UN. During the upcoming years, UNMIK was operating under a 4-pillar

[268] The only principle that Serbia was not ready to accept was the deployment of NATO forces in Kosovo, which would de-facto mean their control of the territory. Americans proposed a draft of another plan, the *Hill Plan* that implied Kosovo becoming autonomous while still being part of Serbia, with the condition of changing its status only if all parties agreed. Kosovo delegation rejected this idea. See Eric Herring. "From Rambouillet to the Kosovo accords: NATO'S war against Serbia and its aftermath". *The International Journal of Human Rights* 4, no.3-4 (2000): 224-24; Marc Weller. "The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo." *International Affairs* 75, no. 2 (1999): 211–251.

[269] For Serbia, this operation was an obvious breach of international law, and they expected help from Russia, their ally in the UN Security Council. Initially, Russia did condemn the intervention, saying it would directly provoke a "Vietnam in the Balkans" and it didn't take any direct participation. Russians called for a peaceful solution. If Russia was to side with Serbia and support Milošević in this conflict, it was at a great risk of facing total isolationism and anti-Russian response from the West, says Michael McFaul. So, he observes, Russia was looking for the best response that would serve Western and its own interests in the long run. Other analysts shared the same opinion that, Russian position in the international order could not allow it to enter a war, and it could not allow it to cut ties (primarily economic) and isolate from the West. The best they could do was to play to role of the peacemaker. See Michael McFaul. "Russia's Many Foreign Policies." *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no.3 (1999): 393-412.

[270] Ivo H. Daalder, and Michael E. O'Hanlon. *Winning ugly: NATO's war to save Kosovo.* Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, p. 103.

[271] See Adam Roberts. "NATO's 'Humanitarian War' over Kosovo." *Survival* 41, no.3 (1999): 102–123.

[272] Find the Resolution here: http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/274488., last accessed March 10, 2022.

structure: humanitarian assistance, civil administration, institution building and economic reconstruction.[273] This introduced many reforms, all with the goal of creating an atmosphere suitable for a decision on Kosovo's final status.[274] International presence in Kosovo ruled out the possibility of military attacks from Serbia but it didn't bring peace and security, as they couldn't restrain the violence between Serbian and Albanian communities. In 2000, 88% of population in Kosovo were Albanians, 7% Serbs and the rest. In this situation, it was difficult to integrate Serbs into the institutions and Kosovo's society. Kosovo continued to exist as an ethnically divided and conflicted society. The future of Kosovo under the international protectorate also remained questionable, as for the political circles the idea of an independent Kosovo was strongly incorporated.

Kosovo was one of the main issues for the incoming Serbian governments after Milošević's departure. As early as 2005, under the auspices of the UN, began the process on negotiations on the future status of Kosovo, which marked the beginning of a new phase in relations between Serbia and Kosovo. The talks were conducted by Marti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, and a UN special envoy for Kosovo. Serbian position was clear, Kosovo is a province of Serbia, part of its territory, and therefore Serbia demands respect for UN Security Council Resolution 1244, that envisioned Kosovo under international protectorate. Kosovo and Albanian leaders, on the other contrary were not giving up on their demands for independence.

As the most serious attempt towards the establishment of an independent Kosovo was the Ahtisaari Plan in 2007, which served as the basis for the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 2008. Ahtisaari presented his plan to Priština and Belgrade, which was rejected by the Serbian Parliament. The Ahtisaari Plan, which was preceded by a series of meetings and visits to the two conflicting parties, proposed the option of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic society that "would govern itself democratically and with full respect for the rule of

[273] Ana Villellas Ariño, and Gema Redondo de la Morena. "An approach to the Kosovo post-war rehabilitation process from a gender perspective." *Quaderns de Construcció de Pau* vol. 2 (2008): 4-30.
[274] In 2002, UNMIK introduced the "Standards before Status" policy that comprised number of conditions that Kosovo should reach before further discussions on their status. Those standards were: Functioning Democratic Institutions; Rule of Law; Freedom of Movement; Sustainable Returns and the Rights of Communities and their members; Economy; Property Rights; Dialogue, and Kosovo Protection Corps. See Security Council, "Standards for Kosovo", Accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Kos%20Standards.pdf.

law, an open market economy with free competition".[275] On the other side, Kosovo Serbs would have their own local institutions and would be linked to Serbia, but within the framework of a multi-ethnic Kosovo.[276] Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, refused to meet with Mr. Ahtisaari, and called the proposal illegitimate. Following negotiations between Ahtisaari, and authorities in Belgrade and Priština regarding the final status of Kosovo, in 2008, almost a decade after the NATO intervention, the Parliament of Kosovo voted to officially break off from Serbia.

Belgrade has not accepted the unilateral act of secession, and a three-year break in any kind of dialogue between the authorities in Belgrade and Priština followed.[277] Serbian authorities, began the process of requesting an advisory opinion on the legality of the Kosovo's independence before the International Court of Justice in Hague. In 2010, the Court made a final decision that "the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law."[278]

It was not until March 2011, at the insistence of the EU, that a dialogue on 'technical issues' began, with the aim of improving the status of the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo. The first step towards that was the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013, the agreement on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.[279] This Agreement envisaged the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo. On this occasion for the first time the presidents of Kosovo and Serbia met in Brussels. Serbia and Kosovo have tried over the years to establish a dialogue and find a joint solution for the citizens of Kosovo.

Kosovo's Declaration of Independence, and Montenegro's independence have brought in a 'new reality' in the Western Balkans. Changing borders and defining the borders of new states is always 'a risky business.'[280] Most of the literature on the issue of the creation of new states in the region of the Balkans, puts to the forefront the fact of the memories of

[275] Jr. Henry H. Perritt. "The Ahtisaari Plan." In *The Road to Independence for Kosovo: A Chronicle of the Ahtisaari Plan* (pp. 163-170), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 167.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Dragan Đukanović. "Relations between Belgade and Priština: From technical to political dialogue." *Medjunarodni problemi* 6, no.3 (2013): 365-385.
[278] "Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo." International Court of Justice, Accessed June 25, 2022, https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/141.
[279] "First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations." Office for Kosovo and Metohija Government of the Republic of Serbia, Accessed March 15, 2022, http://www.kim.gov.rs/eng/p03.php.
[280] Rick Fawn. "The Kosovo: And Montenegro: Effect." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 84, no. 2 (2008): 269-294.

the recent bloodshed that has happened, and the fear that it could be repeated. That was the same thing with Kosovo, that was described as a case that would set a precedent with long-term consequences for Eurasia and the whole world. In his study, "The Kosovo and Montenegro, the effect" Rick Fawn gives reasoned findings on how Montenegro's independence, and specifically, international division on Kosovo's independence affected other separatist movements in the former Soviet space, in particular Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdniestria and even Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina).[281] Fawn underlines that the case of Kosovo has highlighted the frozen conflicts in the former Soviet countries, which directly implied Russian involvement.[282] On the other hand, the case of Montenegro was legitimized by the fact that a referendum was held, and Belgrade officially gave consent for Montenegro's separation, while no such scenario was seen in the case of Kosovo.

The question of Kosovo is essential for our research also from the perspective of Serbian-Russian relationship, and Turkish-Serbian relationship, which will be elaborated in the upcoming chapters. Russia together with China were the only two UN Security Council members that have vetoed UN's attempt to recognize Kosovo's independence. This has allowed Russia to re-emerge as one of the key partners of Serbia and be more present in Serbian politics, as "the defender" of Serbian territories.[283] Russia has offered its diplomatic support to Serbia, and just around this time Russian increased penetration into Serbian economic and energy sector had begun. Russia recognized the independence of Montenegro, mainly because Montenegro was seen as another country in the Western Balkans where Russia can have a dominant position through economic means and political influence. This small Adriatic country, with a predominant Orthodox Christian population has had centuries old historical relations with Russia, and strong socio-cultural connections between Montenegrins and Russians, made it automatically Russian ally in the region. Just like Russia recognized Montenegro, it can be said that Turkey recognized Kosovo for similar reasons. Turkey saw Kosovo, with its predominately Albanian-Muslim population, as another country where, based on cultural and religious ties, could have much visible presence in the Western Balkans. Turkey was one of the first countries that recognized Kosovo and encouraged other countries to do the same. This has caused a temporary divergence between

[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ernest A. Reid. "Third Rome or Potemkin village: Analyzing the extent of Russia's power in Serbia, 2012–2019." *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 4 (2021): 728-737.

Serbia and Turkey. However, the relations were put back to normal as the increase in economic sphere has been recorded followed by a period of intensified bilateral visits.

Conclusion

As described above, since the beginning of the 21st century, Serbia has faced a lot of challenges. Observing the recent events on the political scene in Serbia, it can be concluded the issue of Kosovo remains the central issue. On one hand, it is a burden that limits the options of Serbian foreign policy, while at the same time it is the element Serbia uses to govern balanced politics between Russia and the EU. Russia is important for Serbia when it comes to Serbian territorial integrity and Kosovo, but the West has bigger importance in the economical-political sphere.

Nowadays Serbia, described by many academics and politicians as the 'inner yard of Europe', is surrounded by EU and NATO members, and it is only the question of time, when it will be successfully integrated into these organizations. The EU membership has been defined as one of the main pillars of Serbian foreign policy. Nevertheless, the aggravation of the crisis within the EU caused by the long wave of refugees from the Middle East and other accumulated problems and dilemmas of functioning, left room for strengthening other players role in Serbia. With its natural geographical position, Serbia started becoming one of the hubs for the distribution of gas, and oil, to the rest of the Balkan and Central European countries. Diversification of sources of oil and natural gas supply turned into one of the political and economic interests of Serbia, that increased the investment attractiveness of this region. Serbia has been developing good relations with Russia, Turkey, China, and most recently United Arab Emirates, trying to forge strategic partnerships with them. However, for Serbia EU remains the key geo-economic partner, despite the decreased enthusiasm towards the Union amongst Serbian citizens. Not just Serbia, but the rest of the Western Balkan countries as well, don't have other alternatives that could offer them what the Union does.

5. RUSSIA AND SERBIA

This chapter discuses and analyses contemporary relations between Serbia and Russia. First, historical relations are presented, followed by a review of Russian political comeback in Serbian public discourse. In a similar manner, cultural and economic relations are analysed. In addition, soft power instruments that Russia uses in Serbia are assessed. The issue of Kosovo, as one of the main pillars of Russian influence in Serbia is also elaborated.

Russia is one of the countries which have had the strongest influence on Serbia and the overall contemporary positioning of the country.[284] Relations between Serbia and Russia are largely defined by historical closeness of the two peoples, common religious and cultural heritage. Throughout centuries, Serbia has perceived Russia as a protector state and ally, a dominant political force, as both countries have cooperated in order to fulfil common interests. Despite being geographically distant it can be said that the connections between Serbian and Russian nations are traditionally strong. Characterization of Serbs as 'little Russians' in the Balkans, only implied that no matter the circumstances, Russia will have Serbia as a close confidant in Serbia.[285]

Nowadays, Serbia is considered a 'suitable ground' for Russia to act. After the fall of Milošević, Serbia could find support for its policy towards Kosovo, besides China, also in Russia. This was one of the pillars of Russian influence in Serbia, Russian veto in the UN Security Council on the decision on Kosovo's independence. From this political influence came the influence exerted through strong economic ties, with an emphasis on energy and, of course, culture. Even at a time when Serbia had a pro-Western government, Russia remained as one of the four pillars of Serbian foreign policy.

5.1. Overview of Historical Relations

Ties between Russia and Serbia date back to the Middle Ages, and the time of the Serbian Empire and Tsarist Russia, and they were based were primarily on religious and cultural grounds. In the 16th century Russian ruler Ivan the Terrible (1533-1547), formulated

[284] Selma Delalić, Adem Olovčić, and Zerina Čaušević. "Historical Overview of Opportunism of the Russian Foreign Policy towards Serbia and its Reflection on the Western Balkans." *Periodical for social issues* 62, no.1 (2021): 85-111.

[285] The term emerged in the 19th century in British diplomacy, and ever since then is used as one of the indicators of Russian dominant existence in the political and national mindset. Aleksandar Djokić. "The Perspective of Russia's Soft Power in the Western Balkan region." *RUND Journal of Political Science* 22, no.2 (2020): 231-244.

the first Russian foreign policy goals towards the Balkans region, including Serbia. But it was not until 18th century, that intensive Serbian-Russian relations began to develop when Serbia turned to Russian Tsar Peter I the Great (1682-1725) for help in their fights against the Ottomans. Since then, Russia has been recognized as the 'patron of Serbia'.[286]

The period of Russian patronage lasted until 1878 when, after the Treaty of San Stefano, and later the Berlin Congress at which Serbia gained independence, the first radical split between Serbian and Russian politics took place.[287] Beginning of the 20th century brought certain upheavals in the Serbian-Russian relations, as both countries were experiencing drastic political changes. At the time of the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Russia and Serbia were part of the same alliance. In the first year of the War, Tsarist Russia was sending significant help to Serbia consisting of ammunition, medical supplies, food and similar. However, the collapse of the Romanov dynasty in 1917, and the subsequent disappearance of the Russian Empire led to further changes in relations between Russia and Serbia. After the end of the First World War, relations were maintained between the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics (USSR) and Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Until 1939, the USSR did not even have official relations with Yugoslavia, except with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.[288] Intensification of relations, was followed by the end of the WWII. The expansion of the Soviet empire to Eastern Europe and the victory of the Communists in the Civil War in Yugoslavia (1941-1945) represented a new strong turn in mutual relations, which were built within the framework of the communist ideology. A new radical turn in relations happened in 1948, when a personal conflict between President of Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin occurred. As a result, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Communist Information Bureau, it was suppressed from international organizations controlled by the USSR, and economically and politically isolated. The tensions eased a few

[286] Russia managed to impose itself as the patron of the Orthodox Balkan peoples, and in 1774 with the peace treaty in Küçük-Kaynarca it officially got the status of the patron of the Orthodox peoples in the Balkans. See Aleksandar Djokić. "The Perspectives of Russia's Soft Power in the Western Balkans Region." *RUDN Journal of Political Science* 22, no.2 (2020): 231–244; Selma Delalić, Adem Olovčić, and Zerina Čaušević. "Historical Overview of Opportunism of the Russian Foreign Policy towards Serbia and its Reflection on the Western Balkans." *Periodical for social issues* 62, no. 1 (2021): 85-111.

[287] At that time, Russia directed its political ambitions in the Balkans towards Bulgaria, while it left Serbia to the Austrian sphere of influence. Sonja Biserko. "Russia and its influence in the Balkans." In *The Power of Personal Responsibility* (pp. 267-299), Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008.

[288] Sonja Biserko. "Russia and its influence in the Balkans." In *The Power of Personal Responsibility* (pp. 267-299), Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008.

years later after Stalin's death, and with the arrival of the new leader of the USSR, Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev visited Belgrade in 1963.

The end of the 20th century again brought new temptations and challenges. Both countries went through the 'experience' of the fall of communism, when both the USSR and Yugoslavia disintegrated. However, Boris Yeltsin's Russia, pretended to act as a great power, seeking its place in the post-Cold War world, while Slobodan Milošević's Serbia relied on 'mother' Russia's support during the civil war in Yugoslavia, expecting concrete help. Russia intervened in the Yugoslav crisis only when it was necessary to strengthen "its own reputation and influence in the World", but also to "ensure Russia's long-term interests in the Balkans in establishing new relations."[289] Russia partnered with the West, and recognized the independence of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina when they decided to secede from Yugoslavia. Solving of the crisis in Yugoslavia, which was Russian traditional sphere of influence was carried out without major participation of Russia.

Later, during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999, Russia as the member of the Contact Group urged Serbian leadership to stop the attacks on Kosovo Albanians. Together with U.S. and EU, Russia was working on finding a peaceful solution. Russia was more involved in resolving the crisis in Kosovo, thanks to good personal relations between Russian and Serbian establishment. Russia opposed military action, calling NATO bombing of Serbia unacceptable. Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyridin, together with Finnish Prime Minister Marti Ahtisaari, participated in the negotiations that led to the end of the conflict in Kosovo. The fact that Russia, traditional ally of Serbia, participated in the search for solution to stop the conflict, influenced Milošević who finally agreed to sign the Kumanovo Agreement. The Security Council adopted the UN Resolution 1244, that approved international presence in Kosovo, and Russia participated within NATO peacekeeping troops in Kosovo.

5.2. Russian-Serbian Political Relations

At the beginning of 2000s, a new relationship between Russia and Serbia was being shaped. After the fall of Slobodan Milošević's regime with which the Russian authorities had relatively good relations, democratic parties came to power. An equally significant change

[289] Branko Mamula. *Slučaj Jugoslavija.* Podgorica: CID, 2000, p. 33.

of government happened in Russia, when Vladimir Putin became the head of the state, marking the beginning of different Russia. Although relations with Russia were not at such a high level in the first years after the democratic changes in Serbia, Russian President Vladimir Putin paid an official visit to Belgrade in 2001, as the first President of a permanent member of the UN Security Council to visit Belgrade after the change of government.[290] The government of Zoran Đinđić was openly pro-Western, promoting Western values, so Russian presence in "power politics" in Serbia started disengaging, giving ground to other actors to act.[291] Nevertheless, with the Kosovo secession issue coming to the fore of Serbian internal and foreign policy, Russia became one of the essential anchors in this issue.

In 2008, Serbian Prime Minister Koštunica and President Tadić went to Moscow where they met with Russian establishment, on which occasion the Agreement on cooperation in the field of oil and gas industry between Belgrade and Moscow was signed. This resulted in Russian energy giant *Gazpromneft* buying 51% of Serbian oil giant *NIS*, which was considered was one of most visible turning point in economic-political relations between Serbia and Russia. NIS was sold to the Russians at a five times lower price (€400 million) due to Russia's support in the preservation of Kosovo within the borders of Serbia, as well as the promise of later construction of the *South Stream* gas pipeline, which would also pass through Serbia. However, the construction of the South Stream never took place, and with the sale of NIS to Russia's Gazpromneft, Serbia became completely dependent on Russian gas. Often described as 'the deal of the century' from the Serbian side, in fact this deal only increased Russian influence in Serbia and its dependence even more.

Still, Serbian establishment was defending this decision as being took in the best national interests of Serbia. During the signing of the Agreement, President Tadić said that until now the politics of Serbia and Russia were characterized by ideas about good intentions, but that "today there are also concrete actions, which are the result of increasingly intense meetings at a high level."[292] Tadić also expressed his gratitude to Russia for its support: "It is very important for Serbia to continue to have the support of Russia on the principled issue

[290] "President Vladimir Putin arrived in Belgrade for a brief visit." Kremlin, June 16, 2001, Accessed March 20, 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/41678.
[291] Ernest A. Reid. "Third Rome or Potemkin village: Analyzing the extent of Russia's power in Serbia, 2012–2019." *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 4 (2021): 728-737., p. 1.
[292] "Potpisan ugovor o prodaji NIS-a." RTS, December 24, 2008, Accessed August 15, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/13/ekonomija/35070/potpisan-ugovor-o-prodaji-nis-a.html.

of protecting the integrity of the country," said Tadić, adding that Serbia achieved a lot and defended vital national interests.[293]

The following year in 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Serbia, and on this occasion for the first time 'strategic partnership' was discussed as a character of mutual relations.[294] This marked the beginning of extremely intensive visits of the high-level officials between the two countries, which will become a common practice regardless of the government in power.[295] During the visit of Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić to Russia in 2009, Russian Minister Sergey Lavrov described the relations between two countries as a mutual interest in building strategic partnership. Jeremić added that "mutual relations have never been better."[296]

This was followed by deeper contacts and cooperation in the economy and military-political sphere. The list of products that are not subject to customs duties under the Free Trade Agreement signed in 2000 has been expanded; larger Russian banks were expected to enter the Serbian market, and Serbia has requested a $1billion loan from Russia.[297] Also, it was planned to modernize the underground gas storage *Banatski dvor*, as well as the overhaul of the Hydroelectric Power Plant *Djerdap I*, which was to be carried out by a Russian company.[298] In this period two main determinants of the strategic partnership between Russia and Serbia can be highlighted: first was Russian support to Serbia regarding the politics on Kosovo status, and the second one was the implementation of strategic economic projects.

With the coming to power of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in 2012, relations with Russia were raised to an even higher level. Immediately after winning the elections, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and other government officials began a series of visits to Moscow, which resulted in signing of a series of co-operation agreements. Nikolić's party SNS, has defined itself as a more moderate, pro-European, and neo-liberal party, which at

[293] "Potpisan ugovor o prodaji NIS-a." RTS, December 24, 2008, Accessed August 15, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/13/ekonomija/35070/potpisan-ugovor-o-prodaji-nis-a.html.
[294] "Medvedev makes first visit to Belgrade as Russian president." Deutsche Welle, October 20, 2009, Accessed January 28, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/medvedev-makes-first-visit-to-belgrade-as-russian-president/a-4810672.
[295] Richard Shapiro. "Serbian and Russian Relations: The Future Implications for Serbia's Accession to the European Union." Accessed February 28, 2022, https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/ese/2018/relations/4/.
[296] Bojana Barlovac. "Serbian-Russian Relations Better Than Ever." Balkan Insight, October 6, 2009, Accessed 30 March, 2022, https://balkaninsight.com/2009/10/06/serbian-russian-relations-better-than-ever/.
[297] Žarko Petrović. "Russian – Serbian Strategic Partnership: Scope and Content." In *Russia Serbia Relations at the beginning of the XXI Century* (pp.25-41), Belgrade: International Security Affairs Centre, 2010.
[298] Ibid.

the same time advocated closer cooperation with the Russian Federation.[299] Even more, in the party's programme it was stated that "Serbia should develop close ties with Russian Federation, United States, China, Japan and other countries which are becoming important actors in the international relations."[300]

In 2013, Russia and Serbia signed the Declaration on Strategic Partnership, that states that both sides "rely on deep mutual feelings of friendship, centuries-old history of relations, tradition of linguistic, spiritual and cultural affinities of the fraternal peoples of the two countries."[301] The strategic partnership envisioned, among other things, military, and intelligence cooperation, as well as harmonization of positions in international organizations.[302] For many analysts, the signing of this Declaration was the key to Russian influence in Serbia and the region.[303] Serbian loyalty to Kremlin was once again proven in 2014, when Serbia disagreed on the harmonization of country's foreign policies with the common foreign and security policy of the EU, especially with regards to the restrictive measures imposed on Russia because of Ukraine. Serbia has publicly declared its support of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea, although no political nor economic sanctions have been imposed on Russia.

Cooperation in the military field also represents a significant feature of the Russian-Serbian political relationship. Serbian delegation was received as an observer in the Russian-led-Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Parliamentary Assembly in 2013, and the same year Russia and Serbia signed an Agreement on military-technical cooperation where they agreed to deepen cooperation with regards air and land forces, and defence officers.[304] Opening of the Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre in Niš (RSHC) as a

[299] In 2010 an Agreement on Cooperation was signed between United Russia, the party of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and SPS its leader at the time Tomislav Nikolić. It is interesting to add that another Agreement on Cooperation was signed with United Russia in 2018, under the presidency of Aleksandar Vučić, incumbent President of Serbia.

[300] "Program SNS – Bela Knjiga "Programom do Promena." Srpska Napredna Stranka, October 2011, Accessed June 17, 2022, https://www.sns.org.rs/o-nama/program-srpske-napredne-stranke.

[301] "Декларация о стратегическом партнёрстве между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Сербией." Kremlin, March 24, 2013, Accessed March 19, 2022, http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1461.

[302] Matthias Bieri. "The Western Balkans between Europe and Russia." CSS analyses in security policy 170 (2015): 1-5.

[303] Reid, Ernest A. "Third Rome or Potemkin Village: Analyzing the Extent of Russia's Power in Serbia, 2012–2019." *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 4 (2021): 728–737.

[304] Since the signing of this agreement until 2019, Russia and Serbia have held joint military exercises, "Srem 2014" in 2014, "Slovenian Brotherhood" in 2015 and 2016, and "Slovenian Shield 2019" in 2019. What is interesting to mention is that Serbia held 11 exercises with NATO member states in 2015 and 2016.
"Vojna saradnja Srbije i Rusije i na zemlji i na nebu", RTS, February 16, 2020, Accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/3853139/vojna-saradnja-srbije-i-rusije-i-na-zemlji-i-na-nebu.html.

structure for responding to emergency situations on the territory of Serbia, in the Balkans and beyond, brought a lot of attention, as many analysts, as well as political and security and military structures from the EU and the USA, have expressed doubts whether it was exclusively a humanitarian centre.[305] According to the official website RSHC is "an intergovernmental humanitarian non-profit organization that provides aid and assistance in emergency humanitarian response to all the countries of the Balkan region."[306] Among the Centre's tasks are listed the following: demining, extinguishing forest fires, flood rescue and action in other emergency situations. The Centre provided humanitarian assistance to Serbian cities in 2014, during the big floods, and other than that the public has not been familiar with other activities.

Speculations exist that the Centre was formed as a base or as a future Russian military base for monitoring the region and the Middle East. Suspicions came to the fore especially when the Russian side requested diplomatic status for five Russian citizens employed at the Centre.[307] Diplomatic status would mean immunity from criminal offenses for the staff of the Centre, and it would also apply to the transit of goods, which could enter and pass through Serbia without control or verification. Under the strong pressure coming from EU the decision on granting diplomatic status has been 'on the wait list'.

With the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia is the only country in the Western Balkans that is not a member of NATO and insists on military neutrality. And for Russia this neutrality is important, as through diplomatic channels, it has been pointing out for years the need for the countries of the Western Balkans to remain outside the 'NATO umbrella', that is, to be militarily neutral. However, despite constant claims of military neutrality Serbia does not have an internationally recognized and confirmed neutral status, nor a constitutionally-legal concept of neutrality.[308] Serbia is declaratively committed to remaining militarily neutral, while in reality it participates in joint activities on both sides, both with NATO and Russia. Serbia signed the Framework Agreement on Accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace in 2006, and eight years later, in 2014, the Serbian

[305] Hristjan Ivanovski. "Putin's Neo-Tsarist Russia: A Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean Pattern of Resurgence." *International Scientific Journal of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Macedonia* 28, no. 15 (2015): 25-49.
[306] "About US." Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center, Accessed August 8, 2022, https://www.ihc.rs/about-us/.
[307] Vanja Dolapčev. "The Bear never sleeps: The Position of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Niš." European Western Balkans. Accessed March 19, 2022, https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2018/12/24/bear-never-sleeps-position-serbian-russian-humanitarian-centre-nis/.
[308] Igor Novaković. "Neutralnost u Evropi u 21. veku i slučaj Srbije." ISAC Fund, Belgrade (2012): 3-14.

Government signed the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO. This document represents the highest form of cooperation between the Alliance and a non-member state, where the only next possible step in the relationship would be formally applying for the membership. The signing of IPAP was barely covered in Serbian media and press.

Good relations with the Russian government continued after Nikolić's term. The incumbent President Aleksandar Vučić is also known for its good personal relations with President Putin, and his sympathies towards Russia.[309] Vučić continued with the 'sitting on two chairs' policy while still maintaining good relations with the EU, and not giving up on Serbia's EU accession, but also being very careful not to compromise or jeopardize relations with Russia.

5.3. Russian Soft Power in Serbia

Russia is pursuing its interests in Serbia quite intensively through the means of soft power that is, with the help of cultural, informative, and various high-tech methods. Diverse and rich contents of centuries-old contacts, cooperation, cultural and spiritual exchange between the Serbian and Russian people, formed a specific and recognizable bond that today allows Russia to use the instruments of soft power and to use it as part of the strategic achievement of its foreign policy goals. In this case we can see a number of associations which nurture and develop cultural, economic and scientific relations between the Serbian and Russian people. For example, in 2005, the representative office of *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) and the *International Fund for Orthodox Unity* was opened in Novi Sad and Belgrade.[310] In 2013, the representation branch of the *Russian Institute for Strategic Studies* (RISI) and a branch of the *Russian Foreign Cooperation Agency* were established in Belgrade; *Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, Strategic Culture Foundation, National Victory Centre* and other Russian foundations that were established especially to operate in Serbia.[311] Russia also maintained its existence in Serbia in various forms through media (*Sputnik, Voice of Russia*), different news portal, and other non-governmental organizations. Another realm that Russia is very successfully using to exert its soft power is Russian

[309] Aleksandar Vučić became the president of the Serbian Progresive Party in 2012. He was deputy Prime Minister from 2012-2014, Prime Minister 2014-2016, 2016-2017, and won the presidental elections in 2017, and 2022.
[310] Marta Szpala. "Russia in Serbia–soft power and hard interests." OSW Commentary no.150 (2014): 1-8.
[311] Ibid.

Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church is one of the foundations of Russia's national identity, and the Russian government sees the Russian Orthodox Church as a strategic partner in increasing influence in other Orthodox communities.[312] We find it important to emphasize that in general, Russian influence in Serbia is built upon popular sentiment of Russia as a brother country, and on the on the affiliation of the centuries-old ties between Orthodox Churches of Russia and Serbia.[313] It has been pointed out several times by church officials that, two sister Orthodox churches is a factor that greatly contributes to the closeness of the two states and peoples. The Russian religious information portal *Orthodoxy* has been launched in Serbian language, which contains articles by Russian theologians and attitudes that are in line with Serbian national interests, especially in Kosovo. After the secession of Kosovo, the Russian Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia has supported the Serbian side on several occasions, stressing that Kosovo is the beginning of the country's spiritual and cultural history. Additionally, Patriarch Kirill stated that when a "Russian man comes to Serbia, he really feels at home", and that "unity of religion, culture, very close historical ties, common blood shed for common victories, all that firmly connects our peoples." [314]

Based on the insight into the Register of Associations of the Business Registers Agency in 2015, 93 associations with Serbian-Russian friendship operate in the Republic of Serbia.[315] The number of these associations is a clear indicator of Serbia's contextual suitability for Russian soft power. The ease with which these institutions work in Serbia is conditioned by the fact that half of the population is openly pro-Russian, while the ruling political elite is more than publicly in favour of Russia, especially the former President Tomislav Nikolić.[316] Especially after 2007, and realization of deeper cooperation between Russia and Serbia, a strong current of supporters has appeared, those who call themselves Russophiles and who see Russia as a protector or salvation for Serbia, the Serbian people,

[312] Dejan Tadić. "The concept of soft power in Russian foreign policy in the twenty-first century." *Medjunarodni problemi* 68, no.1 (2016): 112-132.
[313] Both churches are local and autocephalous churches, with the level of a patriarchate.
[314] See Srđan Barišić. "The Role of the Serbian and Russian Orthodox churches in shaping governmental policies." In *The Warp of Serbian Identity*, ed. Sonja Biserko (pp. 105-126), Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2016., p. 107-108.
[315] Dejan Tadić. "The concept of soft power in Russian foreign policy in the twenty-first century." *Medjunarodni problemi* 68, no.1 (2016): 112-132.
[316] Jelica Kurjak. "Contemporary relations between Serbia and Russia: Determinants and Challenges." *Međunarodni problemi* 69, no. 4 (2017): 547-566.

the Orthodox spirit and similar.[317] For Ernest Reid also, Rusophilia in Serbia is not a new phenomenon, as he argues that it resurged both within the ruling political elites, and general public after Serbian Progressive Party (SPS) came into power.[318]

Opinion polls still show that in general, the population sees Russia as one of the countries with which Serbia currently has the best relations. In a survey conveyed by *International Republican Institute* in 2015, 58% of respondents said that Serbia's interests are best served by maintaining strong relations with Russia.[319] Another poll by the *Belgrade Centre for Security Policy*, showed that Russia was perceived by 70 % of Serbians, as a major political power and 79% think Russia is a major military power.[320] Additionally, 61% of those surveyed said Russian influence on Serbian foreign policy was positive. Moreover, President Putin enjoys enormous popularity in Serbia, as one of the most popular foreign leaders, whose popularity might be equalized with the country's president. According to global opinion poll about popularity on world leaders conducted by *Gallup International* in 2018, 81% of respondents in Serbia have a favourable opinion of Putin.[321] After Putin, the most popular was Chinese President Xi Jinping, followed by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel. During his official visit in Moscow in 2012, the then Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić, declared the only thing he loves more than Russia is Serbia.[322]

5.4. Russian Reaction to Kosovo's Independence

Russia has been involved in the Kosovo issue since 1998, when as a part of the Contact Group tried to settle the problem by peaceful means.[323] Russia together with China,

[317] On the other side is a very few who look at Russia with suspicion, and who believe that Russia strives to occupy and colonize Serbia. The story of Rusophobia in Serbia, unlike in other European countries, explains Proroković, in Serbia is gaining the opposite effect. "Looking from the essential point and statistical point of view, it is impossible that one comprehensive Moscow activity, produces a concrete and positive result in only one case. In Serbia!" Cited in Dušan Proroković. "Russian Vector in Serbian Politics: Impacts and outcomes on regional relations." *Institute of International Politics and Economics* (2020): 196-211.

[318] Reid, Ernest. "Moscow's Public diplomacy and Russophilia in Serbia 2012–2019." *Godišnjak FPN* 14, no. 23 (2020): 119-139.

[319] "Survey of Serbian Public Opinion." International Republican Institute, Accessed January 11, 2022, https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/serbia_november_2015_poll_public_release.pdf.

[320] "Public Opinion on the Security of Serbia and Dialogue with Pristina." Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, December 2016 - January 2017, Accessed January 11, 2022. http://www.bezbednost.org/All-publications/6464/Public-Opinion-on theSecurity-of-Serbia-and.shtm.

[321] "Global Leaders 2018." Gallup International, Accessed January 22, 2022, https://www.gallup-international.com/fileadmin/user_upload/surveys/2018/2018_End-of-Year_Global-Leaders.pdf.

[322] "To Russia, with love." The Economist, September 18, 2012, Accessed January 22, 2022. https://www.economist.com/eastern-approaches/2012/09/18/to-russia-with-love.

[323] The Contact Group formed by Russia, United Kingom, France, Germany and Italy in 1998, had the main aim of finding a peaceful solution for the crisis in Kosovo.

proposed a resolution to the UN Security Council to stop further escalation of the war, but its ideas did not receive the need support of other member states of the UN Security Council.[324] As the situation was escalating, Serbia was counting on Russian support, while Russians didn't think that USA would have the needed support of UN member countries for a military intervention. Even if military intervention would be launched, nobody expected that it would last longer than one week.[325]

During NATO's intervention in 1999, Russia reacted by withdrawing its representative from the NATO headquarters in Brussels. Nevertheless, its reaction did not go beyond rhetoric and diplomacy.[326] It can be said that Russia complied with Western demands, but at the same time left the impression with Serbs that it was protecting their interests.[327] For instance, during the intervention, the Russian embassy remained working for numerous delegations that came from Russia as peace mediators. One of them was the Russian delegation led by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who stated the necessity of stopping "NATO aggression against the FRY, but also retreat of Yugoslav army and police forces from Kosovo."[328]

After Milošević agreed to the conditions proposed by former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, and Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, UN Resolution 1244 was adopted, which approved the establishment of the Temporary Administrative Mission of UN in Kosovo (UNMIK), and Kosovo was placed under the mandate of the UN. Russia accepted participation in the UN peacekeeping force under the auspices of NATO in Kosovo. Russia initially joined the KFOR mission, "within a unified chain of command", and sent troops as a part of an international contingent.[329] In 2003, Russia withdrew its troops from Kosovo.

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[324] Sonja Biserko. "Russia and its influence in the Balkans." In *The Power of Personal Responsibility* (pp. 267-299), Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008.

[325] During the first days of bombing, people would go out on the streets, organize concerts, sing, and dance with the aim of proving that they are not afraid

[326] Here, Gabriel Gordetsky makes a genuine observation by saying that Kosovo crisis portrayed the best the "aspirations and constraints in Russian foreign policy; while it confirmed the significance Moscow attached to traditional interests it also showed the limits of Russia's attempt of a more resolute and independent policy." Gabriel Gorodetsky. "Introduction." in *Russia between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Treshold of the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 10-20), London: Frank Class, 2003, p. 12.

[327] During the negotiations in Rambouillet and Paris, Russia did not use its influence to pressure Milošević to accept the offered agreement.

[328] Sonja Biserko. "Russia and its influence in the Balkans." *In The Power of Personal Responsibility* (pp. 267-299), Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008., p. 288.

[329] "The Situation in and Around Kosovo", NATO, June 18, 1999, Accessed March 15, https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-097e.htm.

In 2006/2007, when the talks on possible independence of Kosovo were supervised by UN, Russia warned that if Kosovo is granted international recognition, Russia will recognize the independence of other de facto states such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transdniestria.[330] In 2008, Russia strongly condemned the unilateral decision of the Kosovo authorities to proclaim independence and urgently convened a meeting of the UN Security Council. Russian ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin, said that Moscow would insist on respecting UN Resolution 1244, which guarantees the territorial integrity of Serbia.[331] After a two-hour debate at the UN, in which Russia supported Belgrade's request for the Security Council to reaffirm Serbia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, the session ended without a resolution due to diametrically opposed views of China and Russia on the one hand and the US and European countries.[332]

Moscow claimed this Declaration on Independence had violated the 1999 agreement and the UN Resolution 1244, thus creating an atmosphere that can have far more serious consequences.[333] Russian officials confirmed their full support for Serbia. President Putin has called the case of Kosovo as "a terrible precedent, which will de facto blow apart the whole system of international relations, developed not over decades, but over centuries."[334] He called on the hypocrisy and double standards of the countries of the European community, stating that "Kosovo breakaway is illegal."[335] Especially in the first years, Serbia tried to slow down the pace of recognition of Kosovo and transfer the debate from the political to the legal field, where the support of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, and above all Russia, was necessary. Radeljić recalls when in 2009 Russian Federation submitted a 40-page statement to the International Court of Justice, for an advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. [336] Russia's support for Serbia has prevented Kosovo from joining most international

[330] Marietta S. König. "The Effects of the Kosovo Status Negotiations on the Relationship Between Russia and the EU and on the De Facto States in the Post-Soviet Space." OSCE Yearbook 2008 (2007): 37-50.
[331] "UN membership door closed for Kosovo – Moscow," Russia Today, August 4, 2010, Accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.rt.com/russia/churkin-kosovo-un-resolution/.
[332] Marc Weller. "Kosovo's Final Status". *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2008): 1223-1243.
[333] "Statement by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Kosovo Settlement". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Accessed September 7, 2021, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/354022
[334] "Putin calls Kosovo independence "terrible precedent." The Sydney Morning Herald, February 23, 2008 Accessed September 5, 2020, https://www.smh.com.au/world/putin-calls-kosovo-independence-terrible-precedent-20080223-gds2d5.html.
[335] "Kosovo breakaway illegal, says Putin." The Guardian, February 15, 2008, Accessed September 5, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/15/russia.kosovo.
[336] Branislav Radeljić. "Russia's Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing Its Own Influence in Europe?" *Region* 6, no.2 (2017): 273-300.

institutions, especially those where Russia has a veto, such as the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE).

The final say of Kremlin is that they would only support solutions acceptable to Belgrade, not imposed, and approved by the UN Security Council. Russia strongly insists on the of territorial integrity in the case of Serbia, but it is also concerned with its own position in the South European affairs. This situation, in which Russia has a veto when it comes to the future status Kosovo, is a strong pillar on which Russia's foreign policy towards Serbia relies. Russia is building a leverage, using Kosovo as one of the factors in its competition with the West in the Western Balkans.

5.5. Economic Indicators

Since the early 2000s, rapid economic growth has enabled Russia to strengthen its position in international relations. In its foreign policy performance, Russia had become more ambitious, acting with much more self-confidence. From 4.7% in 2002, Russian GDP rose up to 7.3% which was an indicator of an improving national economy.[337] This has enabled Russia to be economically present in the region of Western Balkans, which created conditions for Russia to strength its influence. Serbia has shown great interest in attracting Russian capital and developing joint projects, mainly in energy sector.

This fact can be confirmed if we look at the chronological order of the development of economic relations between Russia and Serbia. The Free Trade Agreement, signed in 2000, stipulated that goods proven to originate in Serbia (which have more than 50% content from Serbia) are not subject to customs duties when intended for the Russian market.[338] This Agreement is considered as one of the most important factors that Serbia has in attracting foreign investments, considering that except for the former Soviet republics, no country in the world has free trade with Russia.

In January 2008, the Agreement on Cooperation between Serbia and Russia in the field of oil and gas economy was signed, and in December the same year Serbia and Russia signed an agreement on the sale of a 51% stake in the *Petroleum Industries of Serbia* (NIS) to Russian *Gazprom Export*. By signing this Agreement, Russia has gained a dominant

[337] Sandra Baniak. "Russia's economic soft power: The case of Serbia." *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 18, no. 3 (2020): 93-114.
[338] "Sporazumi o razvojnoj trgovini." Razvojna agencija Srbije, Accessed August 23, 2021, https://ras.gov.rs/podrska-izvozu/sporazumi-o-slobodnoj-trgovini.

position in the Serbian energy market. During the visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to Serbia at the end of October 2009, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed for the completion of the construction of an underground gas storage *Banatski Dvor*. It was agreed that *Gazprom* will receive 51% of shares in the company, and *Srbijagas* 49%, as well as that the two companies have the same share in the joint venture for the construction of gas storage facilities in *Banatski Dvor*, whose capacity will reach 450 million cubic meters of gas.[339] It was then assessed that the energy agreement on the sale of NIS could have a multiple positive impact on the Serbian economy.[340] Amongst other bilateral agreements that were signed during this visit, the agreement regarding the establishment of a shared company that would manage the section of the *South Stream* gas pipeline, later turned into *Turk Stream*, was also included.[341] Moreover, in 2013, Serbia and Russia agreed to rebuild the *Novi Sad Oil Refinery* and launch a program to boost the processing of oil derivatives at the *Pančevo* refinery, with a total expenditure of $1.7 billion over the next two years.[342]

From 2005 to 2013 Russia invested $665 million in Serbia, which is 4.5% of all foreign investments carried out over that period.[343] Russia was the 8th most popular country for Serbian foreign direct investment in 2015, with $8.52 million. This was a big increase compared to 2010, when Russia was not even among the top 20 destinations of Serbian

[339] Bojana Barlovac. "Reactions to Medvedevs Visit to Serbia," Balkan Insight, October 21, 2009, Accessed August 23, 2021, https://balkaninsight.com/2009/10/21/reactions-to-medvedev-s-visit-to-serbia/

[340] Ana Jović-Lazić, and Ivona Lađevac. "Odnosi Srbije i Rusije–uticaj na međunarodni položaj naše zemlje." *Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu* (2018): 173-196.

[341] The South Stream pipeline project and its transit revenues were a huge boost for the Serbian government at the time, despite estimates that the pipeline itself would be a financial loss even in high demand. Nevertheless, the cancellation of the project in December 2014, meant that Serbia had little tangible benefits from the project. The construction of a pipeline that will be a replacement for South Stream, the Turk Stream was agreed in October 2016. In the meantime, Serbia adopted the energy regulations of the EU, which raised the issue of legal contradictions between the Turkish-led Turk Stream project and Serbia's ability to participate in it. See more in Vihma Antto, and Umut Turksen. "The geoeconomics of the South Stream pipeline project." *Journal of International Affairs* 69, no.1 (2015): 34-53; Chi Kong Chyong, and Benjamin F. Hobbs. "Strategic Eurasian natural gas market model for energy security and policy analysis: Formulation and application to South Stream." *Energy Economics* 44 (2014): 198-211.

[342] The cancellation of the South Stream project however unpleasantly surprised the Serbian government. This large investment project was supposed to contribute to Serbia's energy security and provide it with a strategic role in the region. The disappointment was big because it was believed that NIS was sold to the Russians at a lower price than the market price, so that the country would become one of the key ones in the project of building the South Stream gas pipeline. Later Russia and Serbia agreed on other forms of compensation in the form of agricultural cooperation, export of certain products, additional loans etc. See Marta Szpala. "Central and South-Eastern Europe after the cancellation of South Stream." The Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warszawa 2014, Accessed July 5, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2014-12-17/central-and-south-eastern-europe-after-cancellation-south-stream.

[343] Aleksandar Vasović, and Matt Robinson. "Eastern Europe counts cost of a pipeline's demise." Reuters, December 12, 2014, Accessed April 1, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/southstream-europe-cost/eastern-europe-counts-cost-of-a-pipelines-demise-idUSL6N0TU2RR20141212.

investors.[344]Among the most important Russian investors in Serbia are *Gazpromneft*, which owns the majority of shares in Serbian *NIS*, then *Lukoil* that privatized Serbian *Beopetrol*. In 2010, Russian *Jugorosgas* provided funds for the construction of Niš-Leskovac 50 km long pipeline in Serbia. In addition to energy investments, Russians have invested in other sectors, such as mechanical engineering, chemical industry, tourism, and banking.[345] According to the data of the Serbian Ministry of Finance, more than 1.500 economic establishments in Serbia have business cooperation with Russia.[346] Approximately 800 of them only deal with imports of good, while 750 deal with exports.

As seen in the table below (Table 4), in 2010 there was a growth of 55% of Serbian exports to Russia, respectively around 49% in 2011, while total trade balance was $3.46 billion.[347] The total trade between Serbia and Russia in 2012 declined to $2.7 billion. In 2013, total trade was $3 billion, which represented a growth of around 11%.[348] In 2014, the numbers on total trade balance stayed relatively the same at $3.36 billion.[349]

Table 4. Total trade volume between Serbia and Russia in millions of US dollars (2000-2014)[350]

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2013	**2014**
Total Trade Volum	**405**	877	1.557	2.453	4.043	2.691	2.945	2.967	**3.369**
Exports from Serbia	**85**	90	154	311	511	535	867	1.063	**1.029**
Imports from Serbia	**320**	787	1.403	2.142	3.492	2.152	2.087	1.904	**2.340**

Source: The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-US/oblasti/spoljna-trgovina.

[344] "Serbia's cooperation with China, the European Union, Russia and the United States of America." Directorate-General for External Policies by European Parliament, November 2017: 4-48. Accessed March, 17, 2022, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ab5192c5-de27-11e7-a506-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

[345] Goran Nikolić. "Spoljnotrgovinska robna razmena Srbije i Rusije 2000-2021: Dinamička i strukturna analiza." *Finansije* no. 1-6 (2021): 7-25., p. 15.

[346] "Economic Cooperation: Republic of Serbia – Russian Federation." Accessed August 11, 2022, https://buyserbian.com/economic-cooperation-republic-of-serbia-the-russian-federation/.

[347] Jasminka Simić. "Economic aspects of strategic partnership between Serbia and Russia." *The New Century* (2014): 22-32.

[348] Ibid.

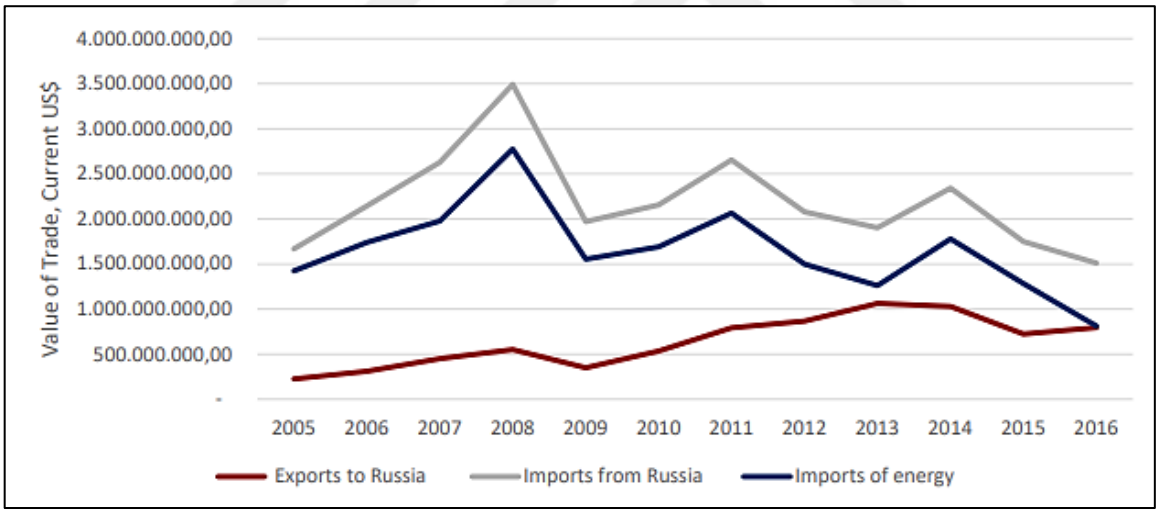
[349] Ibid.

[350] Data from 2002-2005 referes to Serbia and Montenegro.

In 2014, Serbian GDP was $47.06 billion. Out of Serbia's total foreign trade volume in 2014, which was $35.45 million, 8.87% ($3.36 million) was with Russia.[351] In general, the biggest percent of Russian exports is crude petroleum (around 40%), petroleum gas (30%) copper wire, raw aluminium, chemical fertilizers, self-propelled rail transport etc, and when it comes to imports, the biggest percent of imported goods is fruits (apples and pears), packed medicaments, wood carpentry, knit socks and hosiery. [352]

After 2013, trade between Russia and Serbia was practically stagnant, with exports growing marginally.[353] In this regard, apart from the acquisition of NIS, there has been no significant inflow of large Russian investments to Serbia, and apart from energy sector and oil and gas imports, Russia's role in the Serbian economy has been decreasing.[354] Namely, from 2005-2013, Russia invested $660.9 million in Serbia, of which the most noteworthy part was in gas and oil sector, while the investments in other areas were almost neglectable.[355]

Figure 1. Trade between Russia and Serbia 2005 – 2016



Source: "Serbia's Cooperation with China, the European Union, Russia and the United States of America." Directorate-General for External Policies, European Parliament, November 2017., p. 28.

[351] "Serbia, FR(Serbia/Montenegro) Trade Summary 2014." World Integrated Trade Solution, Accessed July 5,2022, https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/SER/Year/2014/Summarytext.

[352] "Serbia, Exports, Imports and Trade Partners." OEC, Accessed March 2, 2022, https://oec.world/en/profile/country/srb?yearSelector1=exportGrowthYear11&yearSelector2=importGrowthYear11.

[353] Goran Nikolić, "Spoljnotrgovinska robna razmena Srbije i Rusije 2000-2021: Dinamička i strukturna analiza." *Finansije* no. 1-6, (2021): 7-25.

[354] Marta Szpala. "Russia in Serbia–soft power and hard interests." OSW Commentary 150 (2014): 1.

[355] Sead Turčalo. "Energy geopolitics in the Balkans: geopolitics and European integration of the Western Balkans." *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* (2020): 1-12.

The latest data show that trend of stagnation in foreign trade after 2013 has continued. In 2021, the total trade exchange between Russia and Serbia amounted to about $2.8 billion. Serbia's exports to Russia amounted to nearly a billion dollars, and the value of imports from Russia to Serbia was $1.8 billion.[356] The growth of imports and exports Serbia realizes with other countries has increased in the first place EU countries, (Germany, Italy, Hungary) China and Turkey, while the share of Russia in total trade exchange has decreased.

Conclusion

Russia has based its policy in the Western Balkans on pragmatism, and as the key point of Russia's diplomatic strategy in the Western Balkans, Serbia stood out. Relations between Russia and Serbia have substantially deepened during this 14-year period. Russian presence in Serbia is in general motivated by Russian desire to be perceived as a great power, and to maintain the image of Russia as a saviour of Orthodox communities. Activities in the religious and cultural field have been proven to be successful instruments Russia is using to expand its influence. Enormous popularity that President Putin has in Serbia, only contributes to this situation where Russia is perceived as the biggest investor and closest ally, amongst the Serbian population.

Besides economic and political closeness, the issue of Kosovo's status is one of the reasons why Russia is perceived as a key partner on which Serbia can rely. Support for Serbia's stance towards Kosovo was seen as a motive of Russia to strengthen its influence in Serbia and Western Balkans. Additionally, Serbia's potential in the energy supply direction towards Europe, only helps Russian intentions for a dominant position in the European energy sector.

[356] Goran Nikolić, "Spoljnotrgovinska robna razmena Srbije i Rusije 2000-2021: Dinamička i strukturna analiza." *Finansije*, no. 1-6 (2021): 7-25.

6. TURKEY AND SERBIA

In this chapter, relations between Turkey and Serbia are analysed. As we did in the previous chapter with Russia, in this chapter we chronologically present historical ties between the two countries, followed by an assessment of the current political and economic relations. We briefly evaluate some of the important issues Turkey and Serbia confront, such as subjects of Kosovo independence, and emergence of Neo-Ottomanism in Serbia. We also elaborate on social and cultural ties, as an indispensable part of the Turkish-Serbian relations.

Over the last decade, the shift of Turkish regional politics and Turkey's return to the Western Balkans have become increasingly discussed and written about.[357] In particular, the rapprochement with Serbia stands out in the foreground, with whom Turkey had strained relations since the war in Yugoslavia. This has changed after the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević, and political changes in Turkey, after what Serbia and Turkey opened dialogue to set ground for peace, stability, and closer regional cooperation. Turkey immediately featured itself as the mediator in the region, initiating bilateral and trilateral peace talks between Serbia and other Western Balkan countries.

6.1. Overview of Historical Relations

In relations with Serbia, Turkey emphasizes centuries of common life, and builds relations by viewing Serbia as an indispensable part of its Balkan puzzle. Relations between Serbia and Turkey date back to the 14th century, at the time of Serbian Empire (1345-1371) and Ottoman Empire (1299-1918), when many historical affairs and battles happened.[358] As one of the central events of Serbian history, the Battle of Kosovo (1389) stands out. In this battle, a sentimental event for all Serbian people, Prince Lazar (1371-1389) was killed, and

[357] See Erhan Türbedar. "Turkey's new activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139.; Dimitar Bechev. "Turkey in the Balkans: Taking a broader view." *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 1 (2012): 131-146.; Aida Vračić. "Turkey's role in the Western Balkans." German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Research Paper, 2016.

[358] **The Serbian Empire** existed as a Kingdom 1217 - 1346, when ruled by Stefan the First-Crowned Nemanjić. Under the reign of the Nemanjić Dynasty Serbia experienced the greatest rise in the Middle Ages. According to some sources, it was considered one of the most developed parts of Europe. During the period 1346-1371, Serbian Empire was also known as Dušan's Empire, named after Emperor Dušan Nemanjić, or Dušan the Mighty. After his death, Serbian Empire ceased to exist, and the rule was taken over by Prince Lazar, one of the main figures of the Kosovo battle; **The Ottoman Empire** created in the 13th century was one of the most powerful Empires in history. It existed 1299-1922, and for these seven centuries it stretched over a vast territory. In the 16th century when it was on the peak of its power, it ruled over the Middle East, Southeast Europe, Anatolia, and part of North Africa. The Empire ceased to exist after the First World War, after what the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923.

Serbian troops suffered enormous losses.[359] The Battle of Kosovo was followed by a period of instability and beginning of collapse of the Serbian state. Prince Lazar's son, despot Stefan moved the capital from Kruševac to the fortified town of Smederevo in the north. Smederevo was taken over by the Ottomans in 1459, when the entire territory of Serbia was occupied, and Serbia fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Under the Ottomans Serbia existed as a vassal state, under the central authority of the Ottoman Empire, and its territories were divided into pashaluks. It was not until the Serbian uprisings (First Serbian Uprising in 1804, and Second Serbian Uprising in 1815) that Serbia became an autonomous Princedom within the Ottoman Empire. The Princedom of Serbia was ultimately recognized as an independent state at the Berlin Congress in 1878, later elevated to the rang of Kingdom in 1882. The five centuries under the Ottomans are described and evaluated differently on different sides. Serbian historiography presents and sees the Ottoman rule as a period of "slavery", while the Turks see it distinctively.[360]

Relations between modern Serbia and Turkey were established after the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. From the time of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 until the 1990s, Serbia and Turkey had no formal relations as Serbia was part of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the conflict in Yugoslavia, Turkey recognized the independence of the republics that sought it and supported Muslim Bosnians. Serbia was

[359] At that time, Kosovo was one of the most important political, cultural, and social centres of Serbian people. Many important architectural monuments such as churches and monasteries, endowments of former Serbian kings and princes were preserved in Kosovo. Defence of Kosovo from the Ottomans represented 'defence of Christianity', and the essence of the people's struggle for liberation. That is why, Kosovo often referred to as "the heart of Serbia", represent the personification of historical destiny of Serbian people. Milan Vukomanović. "Images of the Ottomans and Islam in Serbian History Textbooks." in *Images of the religious other: Discourse and Distance in the Western Balkans*, ed. Christian Moe (pp. 17-39), Novi Sad: CEIR, 2008.

[360] In the history books used in primary and high schools, the rule of the Ottomans is described as a period of "slavery", marked by constant uprisings and fights against the "oppressor." For Turks, the result of the centuries long reign, was a common culture in the Balkans, which only enriched its heritage. Specifically in Serbia, the co-existence of Muslims and Christians left a deep mark in the historical and linguistic heritage, folklore, and custom traditions of Serbian people. Additionally, a large number of Serbs converted to Islam, of which some of them like Mehmet Paša Sokolović / Sokollu Mehmed – Pasha reached the highest positions in the Empire. Read more in Ema Miljković. "Ottoman Heritage in the Balkans: The Ottoman Empire in Serbia, Serbia in the Ottoman Empire." *Süleyman Demirel Universitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* (2009): 129-13.; Edin Hajdarpašić. "Out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire: Reflection on the Ottoman legacy in south-east Europe." *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (2008): 715-734.
Another interesting information we came across is that on the websites of Serbian Embassies around the world, in the section on history information about Serbia, it is written that "The Ottomans persecuted the Serbian aristocracy, determined to physically exterminate the social elite. Since the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic theocratic state, Christian Serbs lived as virtual bond servants, abused, humiliated and exploited." See http://www.ankara.mfa.gov.rs/serbiatext.php?subaction=showfull&id=1197024341&ucat=21&template=Headlines&#disqus_thread, Last accessed June 9, 2022.

labelled as "nationalist and anti-Islamic."[361] With this move, Turkey has shown that it wanted to play the role of protector of Muslims in the region, which was part of its goal of reaffirming itself as a regional power. Turkey became more active in the Western Balkans and believed that the crisis in Yugoslavia could contribute to strengthening its position as a dominant state ready to deal with the regional challenges. In this regard, Turkey has been actively engaged, with the aim of providing support to Bosnian Muslims. It approved sanctions against Serbia, and it also participated in the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by sending troops and war planes.[362] Turkey suggested taking urgent measures in preventing ethnic cleansing against Bosnian civilians, and made diplomatic initiatives within the UN, Council of Europe, and other regional organizations. As a matter of fact, Turkey prepared the first action plan regarding the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Two Stage-Action Plan for Bosnia" and presented it to the UN and Western states.[363]

After the end of the War and signing of the Dayton Agreement, Turkey and Serbia re-established bilateral contacts in 1996.[364] Anyhow, the crisis in Kosovo again led to severance in the relations. As the situation in Kosovo was escalating rapidly, Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem went to Belgrade in 1998, where he held a meeting with Serbian President Milošević. It was reported that at this meeting, Cem stated that Turkey "who was already struggling with the separatism of Kurdish nations, and terrorist acts of PKK, was of opinion that Serbian territorial integrity should be protected."[365] Later, Turkey openly supported the secession of Kosovo, participated in the NATO intervention, by opening three of its military airports, supplying fight jet flights and deploying troops as part of the KFOR mission, after the intervention was over.[366] In the post-war Kosovo, Turkey was involved and dedicating to the status of Turkish minority in Kosovo, and in that regard a number of

[361] Karol Bieniek. "Thirty years of relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Serbia: Changing political and international dynamics." *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 19, no. 4 (2021): 175-189., p. 184.
[362] Fatma A. Kelkitli. "Turkey and the Western Balkans during the AKP period." *Avrasya Etüdleri* 2, no. 44 (2013): 89-110.
[363] Caner Sancaktar. "Türkiye'nin Balkanlar Politikası: 1990 Sonrası Balkan Açılımı." In *Türk Dış Politikasında Yeni Yönelimler: İki Kutuplu Sistem Sonrası Türk Dış Politikası,* eds. Caner Sancaktar and Hasret Çomak (pp.619-688), BETA, 2013., p. 648-649.
[364] Serbia was invited to be part of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). See also Didem Ekinci. "A Chronicle of Evolving Turkish-Serbian Relations A Century After the Balkan Wars." *Uluslararasi Suçlar ve Tarih* no: 14 (2013): 7-36.
[365] Caner Sancaktar. "Türkiye'nin Balkanlar Politikası: 1990 Sonrası Balkan Açılımı." In *Türk Dış Politikasında Yeni Yönelimler: İki Kutuplu Sistem Sonrası Türk Dış Politikası*, eds. Caner Sancaktar and Hasret Çomak (pp.619-688), Istanbul: BETA, 2013., p. 648-649.
[366] Ibid.

ministerial-level visits have been realized to Kosovo.[367] Through humanitarian actions carried out by TIKA and other civic societies, Turkey has managed to help the progress of economic re-build and state building in Kosovo and continued developing friendly relations.

6.2. Turkish-Serbian Political Relations

Changes in relations between Belgrade and Ankara occurred after the October 5th 2000, when Serbia found itself on the path of democratization of the state and society, and active European integration. After Milošević's outcast, a series of bilateral visits between Turkey and Serbia followed.[368] All these visits and establishing contacts had the ultimate goal of shaping good bilateral relations and increasing cooperation. Political changes in Serbia coincided with the political changes in Turkey. The formation of the new government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and country's orientation to European integration, influenced the harmonization of relations in the region. For the first time in the present-day history, Serbia and Turkey were found on the same page of foreign policy goals, aiming to become full members of the same regional organization, the EU.[369] It was clear that the shared vision of the EU membership perspective has created conditions for a closer rapprochement. Hence, the political relations between Serbia and Turkey were becoming very substantial.

In 2006, Turkey was amongst first countries to recognize Montenegro's independence and establish diplomatic relations. Turkey opened embassies in both Serbia and Montenegro. Traditionally, Montenegro and Turkey have good and friendly relations which are characterized by strong economic cooperation, increase in trade and foreign direct investment. Turkey sees Montenegro as one of its important partners in the Balkans, as a large number of Montenegrin diaspora resides in Turkey. In Montenegro, Turkey wants to strengthen its political influence especially in areas with a predominant Muslim population, but it also wants to move closer to the EU, as we stated earlier. Recognition of Montenegro didn't negatively affect the relations between Serbia and Turkey. Already in 2007, Serbian

[367] Nazif Mandaci. "The Turks of Kosovo and the Protection of Minority Culture at the Local Level." *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs* 9, no. 2 (2004): 59-74.
[368] Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem visited Belgrade in 2001, and his Serbian counterpart reciprocated by visiting Ankara the following year, and again in 2003. President of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marović paid an official visit to Ankara in 2004, and in 2005 Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül visited Serbia and Montenegro.
[369] Birgül Demirtaş. "Reconsidering Turkish-Serbian Ties within the Context of Balkan Politics: Identity Perceptions and Impact of Global, Regional and National Levels." Report. Current Turkey-Serbia Relations Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, 2016: 1-10.

President Tadić was on a two-day visit to Ankara, when he confirmed that Serbia wants progress in bilateral, economic, cultural, and military cooperation with Turkey.

The visit of Turkish president Abdullah Gül to Serbia in October 2009 is considered as one of the crucial moments for modern Turkish-Serbian relations. There are several reasons why this visit was perceived as of immense significance. Firstly, Gül was the first Turkish president to visit Serbia in 23 years, after President Kenan Evren paid an official visit to Belgrade in October 1986.[370] Secondly, the visit came one year after Turkey recognized Kosovo's unilateral dependence proclamation, and when relation between Serbia and Turkey were jeopardized. We will deal with the sensitivity of this issue in the upcoming parts of the chapter. Thirdly, this visit has prompted signing of many important agreements, including the Economic Cooperation Agreement.[371] At a joint press conference, Gül and Tadić agreed that the two countries have reached "the highest level of bilateral relations, and that new perspectives for deepening political and economic cooperation were opening before them."[372] During this visit, in an interview with the state news agency *Tanjug,* Turkish President said that the strategic partnership between the two countries is a common and achievable goal, and stressed that Serbia has a key role for stability, security and prosperity in the Balkans.[373] Serbian President Boris Tadić, also stressed out the essence of Turkish-Serbian strategic cooperation in resolving issues in the region, saying "Although there were disagreements in the past, we want to see our future be based on friendship and understanding."[374] He added that the two countries support each other's European integration path.

This visit did not only strengthen political and economic cooperation, but it also represented a step forward amelioration of Serbian-Bosnian relations. Turkey managed to contribute to the adoption of the Srebrenica Declaration in 2010 in the Serbian Parliament.

[370] Serbian President Boris Tadić visited Turkey in 2007 and in 2010; while Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Serbia in 2009. Additionally, dozens of visits on ministerial level have been carried out since then. See Muhidin Mulalić. "Prospects for Trilateral Relations between Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Insight Turkey* 21, no. 2 (2019): 129–48.
[371] Turkey and Serbia signed the Free Trade Agreement and visa-free regime earlier in June the same year. "Turkey." Republic of Serbia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accessed June 5, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/turkey.
[372] "Turkey, Serbia to Strengthen Relations." Balkan Insight, October 26, 2009, Accessed June 5, 2022, https://balkaninsight.com/2009/10/26/turkey-serbia-to-strengthen-relations/,
[373] "Tadić i Gul: Naši odnosi nikad bolji." Radio Slobodna Evropa, October 26, 2009, Accessed June 5, 2022, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/abdulah_gul_poseta_srbija/1860804.html.
[374] "Abdullah Gul u Beogradu." BBC Serbian, October 26, 2009, Accessed June 5, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/serbian/news/2009/10/091026_gulserbiaturkey.

Minister Davutoğlu on couple of occasions emphasized that many tireless visits to Belgrade helped with the adoption of the Declaration, that condemns the crime in Srebrenica when 8.000 Bosniaks were killed by Serbian forces in 1995.[375] The Declaration expresses sympathy and apology to the victims, apologizes for insufficient engagement to prevent the massacre, but it doesn't not categorize the event as a genocide, nor has Serbia taken the responsibility for the committed atrocities.[376] In 2010, Prime Minster Erdoğan and President Tadić met on the ceremony of the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, after what they travelled back to Belgrade together.[377]

As it was mentioned in the second chapter, Turkey acted as a mediator in the signing of the Istanbul declaration between Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010, and as initiator of the "Mechanism of trilateral talks" between Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. Except as an intermediary between states, Turkey also offered solutions for reconciliation of the two fractions of the Islamic Community in Serbia.[378] The agreement on the unification of the Islamic Community of Serbia and the Islamic Community in Serbia was initiated by Turkey in 2011, and the supreme head of the Islamic Community of Turkey, Mehmet Gormez, was engaged in mediation. However, this initiative didn't have a positive outcome, and despite diplomatic efforts by Turkish Religious Affairs Directorate, the two Islamic communities have failed to find common ground. [379]

[375] See the text of Declaration at: http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/eng/pdf/2010/deklaracija%20o%20srebrenici%20ENG.pdf. Last accessed April 2, 2022.

[376] After the adoption of the Declaration, the debate in the Parliament over Serbia's role in the '90s conflicts only confirmed the existing internal divisions in the country. From the ruling coalition, led by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), it was said that responsibility is being taken, but the blame "does not fall on the whole Serbian nation." The DSS (Democratic Party of Serbia) pointed out that the Declaration divides the victims, and it is harmful both for Serbia and Republic of Srpska (one of the two entities in Bosnia), because it quarrels with people, and it does not condemn crimes committed against the Serbs. The head of the Parliamentary group "For European Serbia", said that this act will restore Serbian's international credibility and reputation. See more "Usvojena Deklaracija o Srebrenci." RTS, March 30, 2010, Accessed June 5, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/599011/usvojena-deklaracija-o-srebrenici.html.

[377] During this visit, the Atatürk Turkish Cultural Centre in Novi Pazar was opened, and many bilateral agreements were signed including the Agreement on the visa-free regime. "Most izmedju Srbije i Turske." RTS, July 12, 2010, Accessed June 13 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/736528/most-izmedju-srbije-i-turske.html.

[378] Januz Bugajski. "Turkey's Impact in the Western Balkans." Atlantic Council (2012): 1-5.

[379] The conflict between the two Islamic communities started in 2007. After the stalemate in the negotiations on the formation of Islamic community on the territory of Serbia, *Riyaset of the Islamic Community of Serbia* based in Belgrade was established. On the other side, the Islamic Community in Serbia, *Riyaset of Bosnia and Herzegovina,* was established in Novi Pazar. Both Islamic communities submitted a request to the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Serbia for entry in the Register of Churches and Religious Communities. Since the split, there have been many complications and confrontations between the two communities during the years. Also, in the period from 2009 to 2011, there was a Turkish diplomatic initiative for the unification of the

Another sphere of cooperation between Turkey and Serbia, is military-defence cooperation.[380] As stated previously Serbia became part of the NATO Partnership for Peace Program, and Turkey actively supported Euro-Atlantic integration of Serbia. Accordingly, in 2005, the two countries signed the Agreement on military cooperation. The defence ministers of Serbia and Turkey met multiple times over the years, whereas a mechanism for bilateral defence consultations (2010-2013) was established. In the field of specific areas of defence cooperation, joint exercises of special forces, educations and trainings stand out.

Moreover, in 2017 Turkey-Serbia High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) was established, when the first meeting took place in Belgrade.[381] The aim of this Council is to deepen and develop bilateral cooperation in different areas such as culture, education, economy, and tourism. Since its establishment, three official meetings of the council have been held.

6.3. Turkish Soft Power in Serbia

Cultural and development aid is another domain where Turkish-Serbian relations are flourishing. As the most important components of Turkish public diplomacy in Serbia Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) opened in 2009, and Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) opened in 2015. These two institutions are focused on enhancing bilateral ties through economic, cultural, social, and educational projects.

Since TIKA's opening in 2009 until 2017, it is reported that over 223 projects in the sphere of health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure have been carried out.[382] In TIKA's 2017 Report on Serbia, it is stated that out of the total number of the projects, 35% were projects done in the area of education, 16% of projects in the health area, 14% of restoration projects and the rest was agricultural projects.[383] As some of the biggest projects stand out the rehabilitation of the gynaecological-obstetric ward of the General Hospital in

Islamic community on the territory, but without success. See Jahja Muhasilović. "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans." *Rising Powers Quarterly* 3, no.3 (2018): 63-85.

[380] Đorđe Pavlović. "Odbrambena saradnja Srbije i Turske kao pokazatelj sprovođenja Davutogluove 'Strategijske dubine'." *Vojno delo* 68, no.3 (2016): 94-107.

[381] "Türkiye-Sırbistan Siyasi İlişkileri." Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dış İşleri Bakanlığı, Accessed August 10, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-sirbistan_siyasi-iliskileri-.tr.mfa.

[382] In 2019, the number of the projects was 268, whereas of the total $48.8 million of development assistance provided by Turkey to Serbia, $30.8 million was realized through TİKA. "TIKA u Srbiji realizovala 268 projekata", RTS, October 5, 2019, Accessed June 6, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/13/ekonomija/3686030/tika-u-srbiji-realizovala-268-.

[383] "Turkish Development and Assistance Report 2017." TIKA, Accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/publication/Kalkinma2017EngWeb.pdf.

Novi Pazar, renovation and construction of an elementary school in Raška and in Novi Pazar, restoration of the Ram Fortress at the Danube river (historical fortress re-constructed by the Sultan Beyazid II), a portion of the popular park and Kalemegdan etc. Projects has also been implemented with the objective of preserving joint Turkish and Serbian cultural and historical heritage, such as restoration of historical fortresses, mosques, and similar sites.[384] Most of the projects are directed and carried out in the southern-western part of the country, which is less developed.

The opening of Yunus Emre Centre in Belgrade was officially inaugurated in 2015 by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. YEE has been operating within two objectives, introducing, and teaching Turkish language, and promoting Turkish history and culture through organization of seminars, symposiums, movie nights, concerts. It has been reported from the Centre that four years after the opening, over 700 students from all over Serbia learn Turkish language.[385] People are mainly interested in learning the language because of the rising number of Turkish TV soaps that are broadcasted in Serbia and the region, and because they think speaking Turkish can be beneficial for their business life, as the number of Turkish companies and businesses has been rapidly growing.[386] The opening of a new branch of YEE in Novi Pazar is in plan, where Atatürk Turkish Cultural Centre has been operating since July 2010.

Through the activities of Turkish scholarships provided by the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), hundreds of Serbian students have been studying in Turkey as the holders of the scholarships, or at their own expense. In 2012, 170 students from Serbia were studying in Turkey. That number has tripled to 600 in 2016.[387] And it is

[384] Read more in detail about the specifics of the projects in TIKA's annual reports. "Turkish Development and Assistance Reports." TIKA, Accessed June 6, 2022, https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/turkish_development_assistance_reports-24.

[385] Emre Başaran. "Common history and culture: More Serbians learn Turkish with Yunus Emre Institute in Belgrade." Daily Sabah, June 8, 2016, Accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.dailysabah.com/balkans/2016/06/08/common-history-and-culture-more-serbians-learn-turkish-with-yunus-emre-institute-in-belgrade.

[386] Emre Başaran. "Common history and culture: More Serbians learn Turkish with Yunus Emre Institute in Belgrade." Daily Sabah, June 8, 2016, Accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.dailysabah.com/balkans/2016/06/08/common-history-and-culture-more-serbians-learn-turkish-with-yunus-emre-institute-in-belgrade.

[387] Jahja Muhasilović. *Turkey's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak (2002-2017*). Istanbul: Union of Turskih World Municipalities, 2020.

estimated that around 400 of total Serbian student in Turkey are YTB scholarship holders.[388] The biggest number of them comes from mostly Muslim populated Sandžak region.

The Islamic community inhabited in Sandžak region represents the 'beacon' of Turkish national consciousness in Serbia, and an important element of Turkish cultural propaganda in Serbia. Sandžak has the greatest potential for cooperation with Turkey due to close historical and family ties.[389] It is evaluated that approximately 5 million of Bosniaks that live today in Turkey mostly originate from Sandžak, and people who live here see themselves as a bond between Turkey and Serbia.[390] Former Prime Minister Davutoğlu stressed out that Sandžak is the key region of Turkish geo-political interest, and an essential link between Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania.[391]

For President Erdoğan also, Sandžak is one of the most important bridges connecting Serbia and Turkey.[392] *"Sandžak is the biggest bridge linking us with our brothers in Serbia",* he said during his visit to Novi Pazar, Serbia in 2017, while the gathered locals were holding banners with captions "Welcome Sultan", signed by "Ottoman grandchildren."[393] It is no secret that President Erdoğan enjoys special popularity among Muslims in Sandžak where 90% of the Muslims of the whole country reside.[394] Out of this overall Muslim population,

[388] Nazim Ličina. "GÖRÜŞ - Türkiye-Sırbistan ilişkilerinde 'eğitim' ivmesi." Anadolu Agency, September 17, 2021, Accessed July 5, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/gorus-turkiye-sirbistan-iliskilerinde-egitim-ivmesi/2367281.

[389] Sandžak was an administrative-territorial unit within the Ottoman Empire, between the borders of Serbia and Montenegro. These were the territories that were under Ottoman rule for the longest time, until the Balkan Wars of 1912/13, when the northern part of Sandžak became part of Serbia, and the southern part of Montenegro. From then until the end of the 1960s, mass emigrations of Sandžak Bosniaks to Turkey took place, and today they represent the vast majority of the Sandžak diaspora in Turkey. Even though it officially ceased to exist in 1992, thus being named the area of Raška, the name Sandžak remains generally used among the Islamic population. See Jurica Botić. "Bošnjaci Sandžaka u kontekstu suvremenih geopolitičkih i sigurnosnih izazova u Jugoistočnoj Europi." *Forum za sigurnosne studije* 2, no.2 (2018): 164-188.

[390] Sanja Kljajić. "Sandzak: The Balkans region where Turkey is the big brother." Deuthchewelle, October 26, 2016, Accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/sandzak-the-balkans-region-where-turkey-is-the-big-brother/a-36115582.

[391] Ahmet Davutoglu. *Strategijska dubina.* Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2014, p. 285.

[392] Aleksandar Vasović. "Turkey's Erdogan gets warm welcome in mainly Muslim Serbian town." Reuters, October 17, 2017, Accessed November 8, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-turkey-idUSKBN1CG24F.

[393] Aleksandar Vasović. "Turkey's Erdogan gets warm welcome in mainly Muslim Serbian town." Reuters, October 17, 2017, Accessed November 8, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-turkey-idUSKBN1CG24F.

[394] Sandžak is traditionally inhabited by a large Islamic community, whose members in recent decades have declared their nationality as Bosniaks. According to the last census of Republic of Serbia from 2011, ethnic composition of the country is 83% Serbs, 3.5% Hungarians, 2% Roma, 2% Bosniaks, 0.8% Croats, 0.7 Slovaks, 0.5 Montenegrins, and others. Regarding the religious composition out of overall population 85% of people are Orthodox Christian, 5% are Catholics, 3% Muslim, 1% Protestants, 1% atheist, and other. See Statistic Calendar of the Republic of Serbia, Accessed September 15, 2021, https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2021/Pdf/G202117014.pdf.

50% identify themselves as Bosniaks, 33.5% as Serbs, 7% as Montenegrins, 1% of Albanians, and the rest. As reported from the locals, Erdoğan here is not only respected and praised for strengthening cultural and economic ties, but also "for stopping secularization of Turkey and returning to Islam."[395]

Amongst Serbian academics and intellectuals, there is animosity and disbelief towards President Erdoğan and his politics towards the Western Balkan region. Not only amongst academics but also amongst Serbian citizens there is perception that Turkish increased presence is a "hidden political agenda of Neo-Ottomanism", all in the goal of Turkey achieving its imperial ambitions.[396] In the survey conducted on behalf of the International Republican Institute in 2015, almost 40% of Serbian citizens disagreed that Serbian interests are best served by maintaining strong relations with Turkey.[397] And only 1% of them chose Turkey out of the given countries (Russia, EU, Germany, China, USA, Turkey) as the country with which maintaining strong relations would be beneficial for Serbia.

One of the main vocalists and critics of Turkish Neo-Ottoman politics in Serbia is Darko Tanasković, who in his works talks about the Islamic identity of Turkish politics. Tanasković says there is no doubt that Turkish policy towards Serbia and the entire Balkans is based on Neo-Ottoman tendencies. Turkey has been working hard to implement the Neo-Ottoman project of restoring its former power in a new, changed spirit. He says that the most specific characteristic of Neo-Ottomanism in Serbia is pragmatism. Although it relies on the Ottoman past and nostalgia for the empire, the Neo-Ottomanism of Turkish foreign policy is very pragmatic and is realized "tactically flexible with an extraordinary sense of the moment."[398] Another characteristic is of Turkish Neo-Ottomanism is striving to create an impression contrary to the real intentions, to conceal its own ideological and political platforms.

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[395] Sanja Kljajić."Sandzak: The Balkans region where Turkey is the big brother." Deuthchewelle, October 26, 2016, Accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/sandzak-the-balkans-region-where-turkey-is-the-big-brother/a-36115582.

[396] Stefan Jojić. "Erdogan as an admired sultan or an instrument in political competition? Locals' perceptions of the Turkish presence in Serbian Sandžak." Prague Security Studies Institute, Analytical Study (2021).

[397] "Survey of Serbian Public Opinion." International Republican Institute, November - December 2015, Accessed August 12, 2022, https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/serbia_november_2015_poll_public_release.pdf.

[398] M. Hakan Yavuz. *Nostalgia for the empire: the politics of neo-Ottomanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. p. 21-22.

Srdjan Trifković is also of opinion that Turkish politics in Serbia have imperialist intentions. Namely, he says that "Turkish politics are aimed at weaking Orthodox solidarity and expanding Islamic cooperation amongst ex Muslim communities."[399] While interpreting Davutoğlu's politics towards the Balkans, for Trifković the main concern was how Turkey uses the re-defined Islamic identity in its new politics.[400]

It is not unusual for Serbian politicians also to discuss the Ottoman past in this region, implying the existence of Turkish Neo-Ottoman policies. Former Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić (2007-2012), made negative remarks on couple of occasion regarding the century-long rule of the Ottomans. For example, during his meeting with the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Brussels in 2009, he commented Croatia's accession to the Union saying that Serbia "has been under the reign of Turks for 500 years, and that they did not want to be in the same waiting room with them for the EU membership."[401] On another occasion in 2010, he stated that "if Serbia did not become a new member of the EU, it would be found under the Turkish influence as it was during the Ottoman times."[402]

Even though Serbia is not referred to as a strategically important country in Davutoğlu's *Strategic Depth,* observing Turkish activities in Serbia, it cannot be denied that traces of Neo-Ottomanism are present. As it was mentioned, main part of Turkish activities, interest and investments are directed toward the Muslim communities in Serbia, in particular the region of Sandžak. For instance, most of TIKA's activities are focused on restoration of Ottoman heritage and cultural sites in this region. Additionally, the plans of opening another YEE centre in Novi Pazar, and Maarif Foundation's headquarters, indicates that Turkey conceives former Ottoman territories as the basis of its contemporary politics in Serbia. Also, the attempt of mediating in the dispute between two Islamic communities in Serbia can be seen as a dimension of Neo-Ottoman approach, whereas centuries of Ottoman presence in this region have given Turkey somehow the 'right' of meddling into the interior affairs of states, in this case Serbia, even under the excuse of help and mediation.

[399] Ibid., p. 219.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Cited in Erhan Türbedar. "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 139-158., p. 147.
[402] Ibid.

6.4. The Kosovo Issue and Turkey

The recognition of Kosovo as an independent state by Turkey, the day after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in February in 2008, was considered to be an aggravating factor on the path of rapprochement between Serbia and Turkey. Turkey even encouraged the acceptance of the Ahtisaari Plan by the UN Security Council.[403] Relations between Turkey and Kosovo prior to the independence can be illustrated as good, diplomatic-level relations. Kosovo with a 90% of Muslim majority of the total population, emerged as another new partner in the Balkans, and building good neighbouring relations would only contribute to Turkish regional role. Namely from 2003 to 2008, many agreements between Kosovar and Turkish ministries were signed, signalizing a continuation of good relations. Consistently, recognizing Kosovo's independence was an expected decision from Turkish decision-makers, as it was a "continuity rather than a radical decision."[404]

This decision, however, wasn't welcomed from the Serbian side. Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned all its ambassadors from the countries that recognized Kosovo, back to Belgrade. This included Serbian Ambassador in Ankara, Vladimir Ćurguz who was also called back to return to Belgrade for consultations, and the Ministry sent a protest note to Turkish government. [405] This move didn't implicit severance of diplomatic relations, as it was a move aimed at protecting Serbian territorial integrity and sovereignty, it was announced from the Serbian Government. The ambassador was sent back to his post a few months later. Serbian and Turkish establishment "agreed to disagree" on the issue of Kosovo and focus on areas where they can cooperate.[406] In March 2009, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić described Turkish-Serbian relationship as a strategic partnership, and Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Belgrade later in October 2009, which initiated further thaw

[403] Birgül Demirtaş. "Turkey's Recognition of Kosovo Independence and its Relations with Serbia." In *Kosovo Sui Generis or Precedent in International Relations*, ed. Dušan Proroković (pp. 187-208), Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 2018.
[404] Turkey however hasn't changed its position on Kosovo. It still supported Kosovo's independence, and in 2009 Turkey opened the embassy in Priština, capital of Kosovo. Also, Turkey was one of the countries that endorsed Kosovo's acceptance in regional organizations and UN. See Birgül Demirtaş. "Turkey's Recognition of Kosovo Independence and its Relations with Serbia." In *Kosovo Sui Generis or Precedent in International Relations*, ed. Dušan Proroković (pp. 187-208), Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 2018., p. 189.
[405] "Turkey recognizes Kosovo, Serbia recalls its ambassador." Hurriyet, February 19, 2008, Accessed June 4, 2022, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/turkey-recognizes-kosovo-serbia-recalls-its-ambassador-8261160.
[406] Žarko Petrović, and Dušan Reljić. "Turkish Interests and Involvement in the Western Balkans: A Score-Card." *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 3 (2011): 159-172, p. 169.

in relations after the initial tensions. During his visit, President Gül explained that Kosovo's recognition was not intended to be understood as a direct provocation to Serbia, and he estimated that it shouldn't represent an obstacle in the future bilateral relations.[407]

Despite goodwill to maintain correct relations over the question of Kosovo, the situation could not go without political setbacks. In 2013, while visiting Prizren (Kosovo) Prime Minister Erdoğan at the time, declared that he feels like at home, adding that "Kosovo is Turkey, and Turkey is Kosovo".[408] This has generated a harsh response from Serbian officials. Prime Minister Ivica Dačić characterized it as a direct provocation, while the Foreign Ministry of Serbia described these statements as non-friendly.[409] As a result, in October 2013 Turkish donation intended for the construction of the airport in Ladjevci was cancelled by Serbia, which represented the largest unrealized bilateral cooperation project in the last decade. This was followed by a fierce reaction from the Serbian state leadership. Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić asked for an apology from Turkish establishment and announced that Serbia will pause its participation in the trilateral talks between Serbia, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, he said that "Ataturk's ideas are no longer present within the Turkish leadership", and that he expects reason to prevail in Turkey.[410] Two countries managed to overcome this political rift and in 2014, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu paid an official visit to Serbia.

Despite political differences on the status of Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey describe their relations as strategic partnership. Both countries have expressed their willingness to enhance regional cooperation within constructive agreements and through dialogue. This meant leaving the issues they don't agree on the side, and instead focusing on fields they can cooperate. One of those fields was economic cooperation.

6.5. Economic Indicators

As one of the best indicators of the improved relations and cooperation between the two countries, analysts stress out economic indicators. Turkey is one of important trade

[407] "Turkey, Serbia to Strengthen Relations." Balkan insight, October 26, 2009, Accessed June 5, 2022, https://balkaninsight.com/2009/10/26/turkey-serbia-to-strengthen-relations/.
[408] Yavuz Baydar. "Kosovo is Turkey." Al Monitor, October 28, 2013, Accessed March 20, 2022, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/10/erdogan-kosovo-turkey.html.
[409] Yavuz Baydar. "Kosovo is Turkey." Al Monitor, October 28, 2013, Accessed March 20, 2022, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/10/erdogan-kosovo-turkey.html.
[410] "Erdoganovi balkanski "lapsusi"." RTSm July 14, 2014, Accessed August 12, 2022, https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/11/region/1648838/erdoganovi-balkanski-lapsusi-.html.

partners of Serbia in terms of the volume of foreign trade. Since 2000, and especially the recovery of Turkish economy after the 2008 global economic crisis, there has been a tendency of absolute growth of mutual trade.

At the Economic Summit in Istanbul in 2009, Serbia and Turkey signed the Free Trade Agreement which represented a chance for Serbian exporters to export goods duty-free to Turkey.[411] With this Agreement, Serbian businessmen, could procure raw materials and semi-finished products, process them in Serbia and further place them in the EU, Turkey and CEFTA countries[412] without customs duties or with preferential customs duties. During the negotiations with the Turkish side, Serbian agriculture, the textile industry, and ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy are especially protected, so that higher rates for the import of these products from Turkey will be maintained, while Serbia gets the opportunity to immediately export its goods duty free to all industrial products. The implementation of the Agreement was predicted to create conditions for a significant increase in the total volume of mutual trade and will contribute to greater engagement of Turkish investors in Serbia.[413] With the entry into force of the Foreign Trade Agreement in 2010, an increase in Turkish exports to Serbia has been visible. In the Western Balkans, Serbia is the biggest export market.

Table 5. Total trade volume between Turkey and Serbia 2000-2014, in millions of dollars

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2013	**2014**
Total Volume Trade	**146**	113.1	299.3	327.8	519.8	415.6	586.4	692.6	**780.6**
Exports from Turkey	**98.6**	122.0	211.9	278.7	458.1	306.1	380.8	440.6	**506.7**
Imports from Turkey	**47.4**	11.1	87.4	49.08	61.7	109.5	205.5	251.9	**273.9**

Source: "Türkiye-Sırbistan İş Forumu Sonuç Raporu, 28 Aralık 2015." DEIK.

[411] See the Free Trade Agreement at https://www.trade.gov.tr/data/5b9109cc13b8770becf1e66c/2.%20Turkey-Serbia%20FTA-main%20text.pdf, Accessed December 5, 2021.
[412] The Free Trade Agreement in the Balkans, signed in Bucharest in 2006 by: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Montenegro, Serbia, and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.
[413] See more at "Free Trade Agreements." Development Agency od Serbia, Accessed December 13, 2021, https://ras.gov.rs/en/export-promotion/free-trade-agreements.

The list of dominant Serbian export products to the Turkish market include: non-ferrous metals, tobacco products, iron and steel, oilseeds and fruits, rubber products, industrial machines for general use. On the other hand, Turkey mainly imports: yarn, fabrics and textile products, road vehicles, electrical machines, appliances and devices, clothing, vegetables and fruits.[414] According to the official records of the National Bank of Serbia, the total net direct investment in money from Turkey for the period 2010-2019, amounted to $164.78 million, of which the most significant are investments in the textile sector.[415] The same data shows that Serbia has recorded a fivefold increase in its exports to Turkey over the past 10 years, while imports of Turkish products have doubled in value.

As seen from the table above (table 5), from trade volume of $327 in 2006, to $780 in 2014, Turkey became one of Serbia's important trade partners. The trade exchange exceeded one billion dollars in 2019, and it accounted $1.38 billion, respectively $1.5 billion in 2020.[416] The two countries have set the mutual goal of reaching $5 billion trade volume by 2022.[417]

In the period 2002-2011, Turkish foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in Serbia was $32 million.[418] In 2018, that number was $200 million.[419] From 150 registered Turkish business entities in Serbia in 2013, the number has doubled up to 400 in 2016, and currently exceeds 800 companies. Turkish companies are most active in the textile and clothing industry, the construction and machinery industries, the banking sector, as well as the tourism services and healthcare sectors. In addition, economic cooperation is realized within the framework of the Serbian-Turkish Business Council founded in 2002, the Serbia-BiH-Turkey Trilateral Trade Committee and regional initiatives such as the Association of Balkan

[414] Sladjana Zdravković. "Politički odnosi Srbije i Turske od 5. oktobra do današnjih dana." Beograd 2017, Accessed December 10, 2021, https://media.cpes.org.rs/2019/09/Odnosi-Srbije-i-Turske.pdf.
[415] "Bilateral Cooperation, Turkey." Republic of Serbia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accessed on December 12, 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/turkey.
[416] "Türkiye ile Sirbistan Arasındaki Ticaret Hacmi Hedefi 5 Miliyar Dolar." DEİK, Accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.deik.org.tr/basin-aciklamalari-turkiye-ile-sirbistan-arasindaki-ticaret-hacmi-hedefi-5-milyar-dolar.
[417] "Both our bilateral trade and investments with Serbia are booming." Presidency of Republic of Turkey October 7, 2019, Accessed June 19, 2022, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/110987/-both-our-bilateral-trade-and-investments-with-serbia-are-booming-.
[418] Cited in Marija Mitrović. "Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: The influence of traditional determinants on Davutoğlu's conception of Turkey – Balkan Relations." *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Philosophische Fakultät III, Institut für Sozialwissenschaften*, no.10 (2014): 2-69, p. 55.
[419] "Both our bilateral trade and investments with Serbia are booming." Presidency of Republic of Turkey October 7, 2019, Accessed June 19, 2022, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/110987/-both-our-bilateral-trade-and-investments-with-serbia-are-booming-.

Chambers (ABC), Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Association of Mediterranean Chambers (ASCAME).[420]

The evolving economic relations can be view as a noteworthy opportunity for Turkey. Ekinci observes that a big part of industrial investments of former Yugoslavia (of which some amenities are still under privatization process) is located in Serbia.[421] So, the investment made by Turkish businessman will have a double positive effect: "they will not only benefit in the country itself but since the country has a free trade agreement with Russia and Eastern Europe, they will be able to sell their products without customs obligations to Russia and Eastern Europe."[422]

Conclusion

The fact is that Serbia is becoming a very important partner for Turkey in the Western Balkans. As a result of Turkey's active policy in the region, improvement of relations with Serbia is seen as one of the major accomplishments of the Turkish establishment. Despite conflicts over some points, such as the question of Kosovo's independence, or the accusations of Turkey's neo-Ottoman tendencies in Serbia and in the Western Balkans, Turkish-Serbian relations are generally good, and are on an upward trajectory. As often emphasized by Turkish officials, additional feature of the good relations lies in the strong ties between Sandžak Muslims and Turkish Muslims.

In particular, economic cooperation, which includes investments and commodity-trade cooperation, stands out in the foreground. For Turkey, Serbia is the largest market compared to other Western Balkan countries. In recent years, as was reported in this chapter there has been a constant growth of bilateral trade between Turkey and Serbia, Good Turkish-Serbian relations also represent an additional guarantee for stability and preservation of peace in the region. Serbia views Turkey as a very important actor in ensuring peace and stability in the region.

[420] Sladjana Zdravković. "Politički odnosi Srbije i Turske od 5. oktobra do današnjih dana." Beograd 2017, Accessed December 10, 2021, https://media.cpes.org.rs/2019/09/Odnosi-Srbije-i-Turske.pdf.
[421] Didem Ekinci. "A Chronicle of Evolving Turkish-Serbian Relations A Century After the Balkan Wars." *Uluslararasi Suçlar ve Tarih* no:14 (2013): 7-36.
[422] Ibid., p. 25.

7. COMPARISON OF RUSSIAN AND TURKISH POLICIES IN SERBIA

Serbia represents the ground where Russia and Turkey, each preoccupied with their own foreign policy ambitions, strive to convey these ambitions and be present in the region as much as possible. Russian and Turkish presence in Serbia can neither be described as rivalry nor cooperation. Both countries are trying to propagate their interests in Serbia, each in their own way. First of all, both Russia and Turkey want to exploit the advantage of the fact that they have far-reaching historical and cultural ties with the people of Serbia. Russia has positioned itself as the protector of Orthodox Christians, and Turkey as the protector of Muslims, and both countries strive to exert greater influence by maintaining close ties with the members of these communities. This could be best seen in the activities we have described throughout the study. Russia, by establishing cultural centres and organizations helps to spread Russian culture and influence among Serbian population. Moreover, the immense influence Russian Orthodox Church has Serbia, is another tool wisely used by the Russian establishment to accomplish its goals.

Turkey is doing the same thing, particularly focused the Muslim population in the Sandžak region, where there is still a sense of belonging and connection with the Turkish people. In favour of this argument, one can start from the very fact that the local population still uses the term Sandžak, which was in use during the Ottoman Empire. Second factor is TIKA and YEE who are ‘bearers’ of Turkish public diplomacy with their activities. In addition to one operating centre in Belgrade, YEE plans to open another centre in Novi Pazar, where the Ataturk Turkish Cultural Centre already operates. As said before, there is already more than 700 students from all over Serbia who are learning Turkish, as the interest is on the rise. It should be noted that despite existence of Russian organizations, such as Rossotrudnichestvo, and Alexander Gorchakov Foundation, their activities don’t match the capacities of TIKA’s engagement in Serbia. For instance, more than 200 projects supported or sponsored by TIKA have been carried out by now in Serbia.

Table 6. Russian and Turkish cultural institutions operating in Serbia

Russian institutions	Turkish institutions
Russkiy Mir (Russian World)	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)
Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI)	Yunus Emre Institute (YEE)
Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund	Atatürk Turkish Cultural Centre
Rossotrudnichestvo	

Still, the sentiment of Russophilia is very strong amongst citizens of Serbia. Between 60% and 70% of Serbian population see Russia as Serbia's main friend and ally, describing Russia as a major political and military power that protects Serbian interests. This is accompanied by an enormous popularity of President Putin in Serbia, where he is often chosen as the most popular politician, surpassing the popularity of the country's president. Turkey, on the contrary is not even between the top ten countries that Serbians perceive as a partner country, that can represent Serbian interests. Turkey's intentions and engagement are perceived with caution, with implications of hidden Neo-Ottoman ambitions, and deepening of religious ties solely with Muslim population. It is only around 15% of citizens in Serbia that see Turkey as a friendly country.

The Euro-Atlantic integration of Serbia is one of the points where interests of Russia and Turkey do not coincide. Turkey openly supports Serbia's membership in EU and NATO, and as it has often been emphasized in the public speeches of Turkish statesmen, Turkey sees itself as part of the Western Balkans in Euro-Atlantic integration. It has been outlined by Turkish Foreign Ministry that they are against the "artificial division" made in the enlargement policy as Western Balkans and Turkey.[423] Instead, EU should cover all seven candidate countries "without any discrimination."[424] Russia, on the other hand, has been very

[423] Jozwiak, Rikard. "Ankara Urges Brussels Not to Separate Turkey From Western Balkans In Accession Talks." Radio Free Europe February 5, 2020, Accessed July 10, 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/ankara-urges-brussels-not-to-separate-turkey-from-western-balkans-in-accession-talks/30418586.html.
[424] Jozwiak, Rikard. "Ankara Urges Brussels Not to Separate Turkey From Western Balkans In Accession Talks." Radio Free Europe February 5, 2020, Accessed July 10, 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/ankara-urges-brussels-not-to-separate-turkey-from-western-balkans-in-accession-talks/30418586.html.

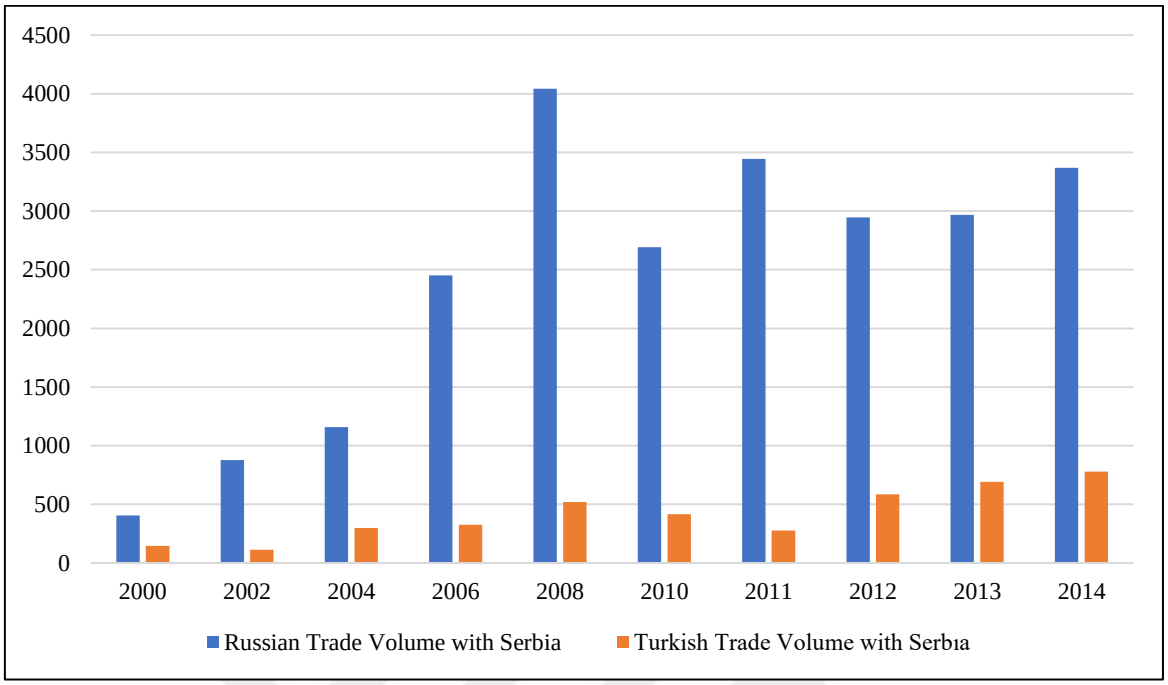
vocal that the integration of Serbia into NATO is unacceptable. In the words of the Russian ambassador to Serbia, Alexander Chepurin in 2013, "Serbian NATO membership, was a red line that in no way suits Russia."[425] Since then Russia has been trying to advance military cooperation with Serbia, by organizing joint military exercises, and signing agreements on cooperation in different fields, that would bring Serbia closer to Russia.

The issue of Kosovo is another unavoidable issue where Russia and Turkey have opposite interests. As it has been presented, Turkey supports the independence of Kosovo, and is in favour or Belgrade and Priština finding a joint solution, and normalizing bilateral relations. Turkey sees another partner in Kosovo in the Western Balkans, as a country of predominantly Muslim population. Russian influence in international politics are of vital importance for Serbia, primarily because of the impossibility of recognizing the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo. Russia strongly opposes Kosovo independence, as the support for Serbian territorial integrity, has been defined as another pillar of Russian foreign policy in Serbia.

Russia and Turkey are pursuing national interests in Serbia, in addition to political methods, through economic methods as well. Total trade volume between Turkey in Serbia has been in constant growth after 2010, followed by the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement, to reach $780 million in 2014, and $1.5 billion in 2020. Meanwhile, between Russia and Serbia, after 2014 a period of stagnation in trade volume was seen. From $3.4 billion in 2014, trade volume has not even reached $3 billion in 2021. Although the dynamic Russian and Turkish economic presence in Serbia cannot be denied, it's still symbolic compared to the strong economic foothold the EU has. In 2011 total trade volume between EU and Serbia was $14.13 billion, to reach $17.31 in 2014. In 2021 total trade volume between Serbia and EU countries accounted for $30 billion. EU is also one of the biggest investors in Serbia.

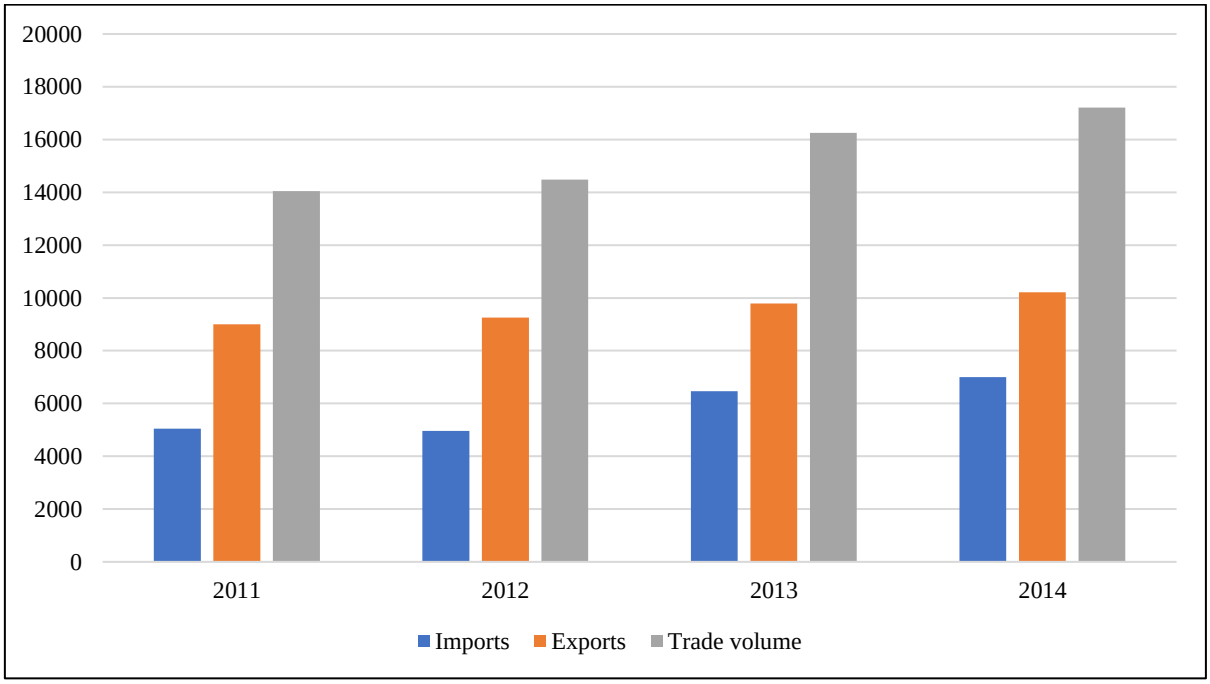
[425] Cited in Branislav Radeljić. "Russia's Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing Its Own Influence in Europe?" *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 6, no.2 (2017): 273-300, p. 297.

Figure 2. Total trade between Russia and Turkey with Serbia 2000-2014 in millions of US dollars



Source: Author's calculations based on data retrieved from Serbian Statistical Institute and DEIK, for the time period 2000-2014

Figure 3. EU trade with Serbia 2011-2014, in millions of euros



Source: "European Union, Trade in Goods with Serbia." European Commission, August 2022.

Table 7. List of important agreements and declarations between Russia and Turkey and Serbia 2000-2014[426]

Russia and Serbia	Turkey and Serbia
Free Trade Agreement in 2000	Agreement on Cooperation in education, science, culture, and sports in 2002
Agreement on Cooperation in the field of oil and gas in 2008	Visa-free Agreement in 2009
Visa-Free Regime Agreement in 2009	Economic Cooperation Agreement in 2009
Declaration on Strategic Partnership in 2013	Free Trade Agreement in 2009
Agreement on the Cooperation in the area of railway transport in 2013	Agreement on Cooperation in the field of infrastructure projects in 2009
Agreement on military-technical Cooperation in 2013	Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2009
	Istanbul Declaration signed between Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in 2010

[426] According to the information of the Serbian Government, between Turkey and Serbia 76 bilateral agreements have been signed in total. Number of the bilateral agreements with Russia has not been specified. See "Bilateral Relations Turkey." Republic of Serbia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accessed August 14, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/turkey.

Table 8. Bilateral visits on presidential and ministerial level (ministers of foreign affairs) between Russia and Turkey and Serbia 2000-2014

Russia and Serbia	Turkey and Serbia
Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Belgrade in 2001	Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem visited Belgrade in 2001
Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić visited Russia in 2007	Serbian Foreign Minister Goran Svilanović visited Ankara in 2002 and 2003
Serbian Prime Minster Vojislav Koštunica and President Boris Tadić visited Moscow in 2008	President of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marović visited Ankara in 2004
Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Serbia in 2009	Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül visited Serbia and Montenegro in 2005
Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Serbia in 2011	Serbian President Boris Tadić visited Turkey in 2007 and in 2010
Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić visited Russia in 2012	Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Serbia in 2009
Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić visited Moscow in 2014	Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić visited Turkey in 2009
Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Serbia in 2014	Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Serbia in 2009 and 2013
	Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Serbia in 2010
	Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić visited Turkey in 2013

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyse and compare Russian and Turkish foreign policy activities in the Western Balkans from 2000-2014 and present the case study of Serbia as a central Western Balkan country that best illustrates the active engagement of these two great powers. The Western Balkan region, as a harbourage of Russian and Turkish influence was a challenge to explore because of its geostrategic location, complex cultural-historical connections, and the new emerging politics of energy security. Thanks to its geographical characteristics, Balkans in general have always been a region with a complex and tempestuous history, where different powers have crossed their paths and fought for influence. The special focus of our research is the Western Balkans, a turbulent region that includes countries of former Yugoslavia, without Slovenia and Croatia, plus Albania: Serbia (including Kosovo), Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia.

We began this research by asking the question to what extent does the activism in Russian and Turkish foreign policy towards the countries of the Western Balkans correspond with their ambitions to be distinguished as great powers? The main hypothesis we argued was that Russia and Turkey are committed to be recognized as great powers in the Western Balkans, by conducting a pro-active foreign policy in the region. Throughout our study it was shown that political, economic, and cultural factors made this region a field of interest for Turkey and Russia, and what was evident was that Russian and Turkish foreign policy approach was based on incorporation of various foreign policy mechanisms and instruments. These instruments included increased economic investments, cultural activities, mediation efforts, and an active approach of Russian and Turkish governments with related governmental and non-governmental organizations. To accomplish that goal, Russia and Turkey, both connected by historical, and cultural-social relations with the states of the Western Balkans, have been extensively using the mechanisms of soft power and energy politics to successfully increase their influence.

After reviewing the literature on the explanations of Russian and Turkish foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans, our argument complements the existing literature that Russia and Turkey have history-based levers for seeking the role of a great power in the region. Russia is using the reference to traditional friendship and brotherhood, Orthodoxy, related language, and culture as an important pillar to influence the shaping of Russian image in the Western Balkan countries. This kind of influence is most felt in Serbia,

through representatives of Orthodox churches, Russian cultural centres, and other organizations. When it comes to Turkey, an important pillar of Turkey's new Western Balkan policy was to protect and strengthen the Turkish and Muslim presence in the region. This influence is based on the Ottoman heritage and close social ties between Turks and Balkan Muslims, where Turkey wants to play the role of their protector. The strong Turkish-Muslim presence in the region also implied stronger Turkish political and socio-cultural influence in the region.

As it was described at the beginning of the research, Russia and Turkey have shown interest in the Western Balkans in line with their historical, geographical, religious, and cultural ties. The main objectives of Russian and Turkish foreign policy in this region, during the 14-year period were distinguished as following: to achieve economic, political, and cultural presence in the Western Balkans. By accomplishing these goals Russia and Turkey wanted to maintain the image of a great power.

Our argument is that Russian influence in the Western Balkans has been present throughout history with less or more intensity, but with a recognizable continuity. We argue that current features of Russian foreign policy in this region haven't drastically changed, and that they can be summarized as follows: identity politics (historical and cultural closeness), economic politics (energy politics), and Russian search of the great power status in the region. Description of the historical genesis of Russian-Serbian relations was used for better understanding the uniqueness of Russian politics in the Western Balkans. It was explained that Russian return to the Western Balkans was symbolical, as thanks to the strong influence of the sentiment of Slavism and Christian Orthodoxy, Russia never left this region. It was also argued that in the shaping of Russian foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, Orthodox Christian religion and Slavic cultural connections were perceived as backbone of Russian political framework. Additionally, Russia successfully used its status as an energy power to influence the Western Balkans. Russian goal was to create a relationship of dependence of not only Western Balkan countries, but also the rest of the European countries on Russian oil and gas. Increasing economic presence eventually affected the political visibility of Russia in the region.

Relations between Russia and Serbia have fundamentally deepened during this 14-time period. It was shown how Russian presence in Serbia is in general motivated by Russian desire to be perceived as a great power. Russia has based its policy in the Western Balkans

on pragmatism, and as the key point of Russia's diplomatic strategy in the Western Balkans, Serbia stood out. The issue of Kosovo's status, as well as economic and political closeness are the reasons why Russia is perceived as a key partner on which Serbia can rely. Support for Serbia's stance towards Kosovo was seen as a motive of Russia to strengthen its influence in Serbia and Western Balkans. Additionally, Serbia's potential in the energy supply direction towards Europe, only helped Russian intentions for a dominant position in the European energy sector. The governments of Russia and Serbia have continued their active political dialogue, and meetings and visits at the highest level between the two countries are held regularly. Russian-Serbian relations after 2014 continued going the upward trajectory. Of particular importance are the good personal relations between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, who have met more than 16 times since Vučić's election as president in 2016. Precisely thanks to the close relations between the two presidents, Russian influence in Serbia has become stronger and more visible. For instance, in 2018, the Intergovernmental Committee for Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation was established. Based on the Agreement on Military and Technical Cooperation from 2013, Russian donated six MiG-29 jet fighters to Serbia in 2017, and 30 tanks in 2020. In 2021, Serbian Government and Russian State Corporation Rosatom signed the General Framework Agreement on the construction of a centre for nuclear technologies and the Agreement on the establishment of a joint venture, which will implement this project on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Based on the aforementioned agreements, the centre for nuclear medicine and facilities for the production of radiopharmaceutical drugs will be established in Serbia.

At the turn of the century, Western Balkans started coming to the forefront of Turkish foreign policy. Following the end of the Cold War and disintegration of Yugoslavia, Turkish position towards Balkans changed substantially. Furthermore, after JDP came to power in 2002, and with Davutoğlu's vision of a more proactive and multidimensional policy, an intensified Turkish presence in the Western Balkans was seen. Conducting such active foreign policy, and by investing significant resources and efforts, Turkey wanted to become an important factor in the processes of political, cultural, and economic development of the region. Turkey, with its strategic position, economic potential, and cultural wealth, certainly represents one of the key regional partners. Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans was characterized by three main features: identity politics (historical and cultural connections), economic politics, and Turkish role as a mediator. As one of the most effective

tools used by the Turkish establishment, to continue the good relations with the region were initiation and realization of the numerous regional initiatives and cooperation, that were mentioned and described. Turkey has been working on significant infrastructure projects, establishing schools and universities, renovating religious and cultural facilities, and encouraging Turkish investments across the Western Balkans. Besides, intensified trade relations have become an important factor in the Turkish connection with the Western Balkan countries. In particular, the blooming of economic relations between Serbia and Turkey was acknowledged as a noteworthy indicator of friendly-developing relations. Advance of Serbian-Turkish relations is for sure stands out as one of the most successful outcomes of Turkish redefined policy in the region. The visit of Abdullah Gül in 2009 was one of the crucial moments for the development of modern Turkish-Serbian relations. This visit has prompted the signing of many important agreements, and it was realized one year after Turkey recognized the independence of Kosovo. It is often underlined that Turkey and Serbia are main factors in solving issues that are of interest for the region. In that context, it was elaborated on the Mechanisms of trilateral talks started by Turkey. In connection to Turkish involvement in the political affairs of the Western Balkan countries, the subject of Neo-Ottomanism, and strong ties between Muslims in Turkey and Muslims in Serbia were elaborated on.

For Turkey, Serbia is the largest economic market compared to other Western Balkan countries. In order to raise bilateral relations between Turkey and Serbia to an even higher level, in 2022 Serbian Government adopted the bill which enabled the citizens of Serbia and Turkey to cross the state borders of both countries without visa or passport, just with a valid biometric identity card. This has been done with the goal of increasing the number of tourists coming from Serbia, that has been on the rise in the past couple of years. In addition, after opening a consulate in Novi Pazar in 2021, Turkey announced the opening of another consulate in Niš, Serbia. Together with the embassy in Belgrade this would be Turkey's third diplomatic mission in Serbia. On the other hand, Serbia has six diplomatic missions operating in Turkey, five honorary consulates and one embassy. Besides increased cooperation in the economic, trade and cultural field, Turkey and Serbia have many other joint projects planned, in the first increasing military cooperation. In this context it has been by Serbian government that Serbia is interested in buying Bayraktar drones, manufactured in Turkey.

The contribution of this research was providing an answer to the purpose behind Russian and Turkish active involvement in the Western Balkans. Instead of focusing on just one side and picking just one great power's activism in this region, we have chosen two great powers, Russia and Turkey that have been present in the Western Balkans throughout history with less or more intensity, but with a recognizable continuity. We have analysed and compared Russian and Turkish interests, ambitions, and foreign policy instruments that have used in their foreign policy approach. The comparative analysis method has aided us in providing our main argument that Russia and Turkey guided by imperial ambitions want to be back in this region, as two great powers, they once used to be. By examining literature in different languages (Serbian, English, Turkish), we aspired to provide an insight into a wider body of literature dealing with a similar research question, thus contribute to the importance of our research.

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